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ANNUAL 1

VAMPIRELLA®

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DYNAMITE ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS

VAMPIRELLA®

HER ORIGINS ARE SHROUDED IN MYSTERY.

SOME SAY SHE'S A POWERFUL ENTITY FROM ANOTHER REALM; OTHERS TELL TALES OF A CHILD BORN OF A DEMONIC MOTHER IN HELL'S FIRE AND DISPATCHED TO CLEANSE THE WORLD OF EVIL.

BUT ALL THESE STORIES SHARE A COMMON REFRAIN: VAMPIRELLA HAS COME TO BATTLE THE FORCES OF DARKNESS – FROM VAMPIRIC LEGIONS, TO SUPERNATURAL EVILS THAT BEGGAR DESCRIPTION.

"BOUND"

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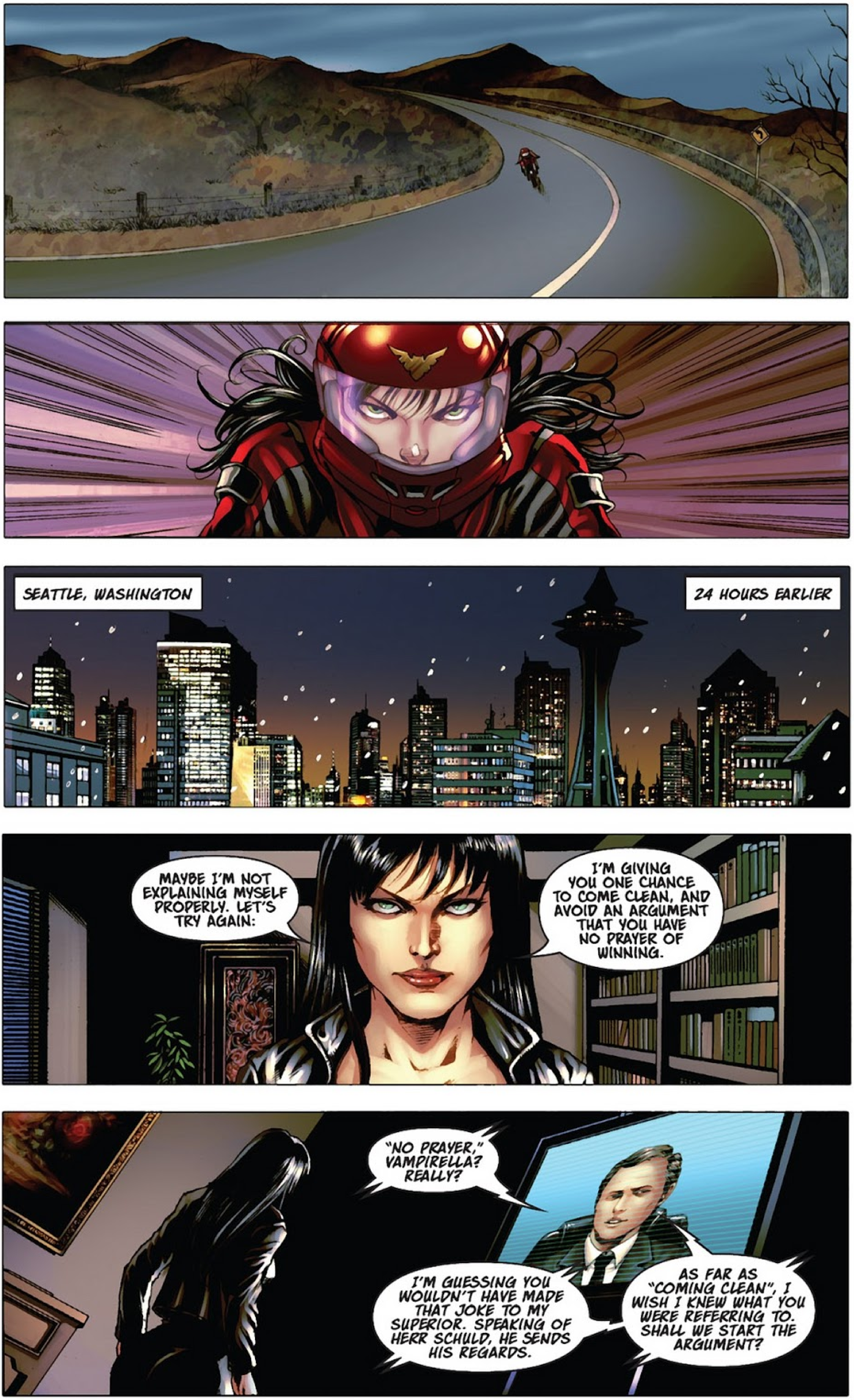
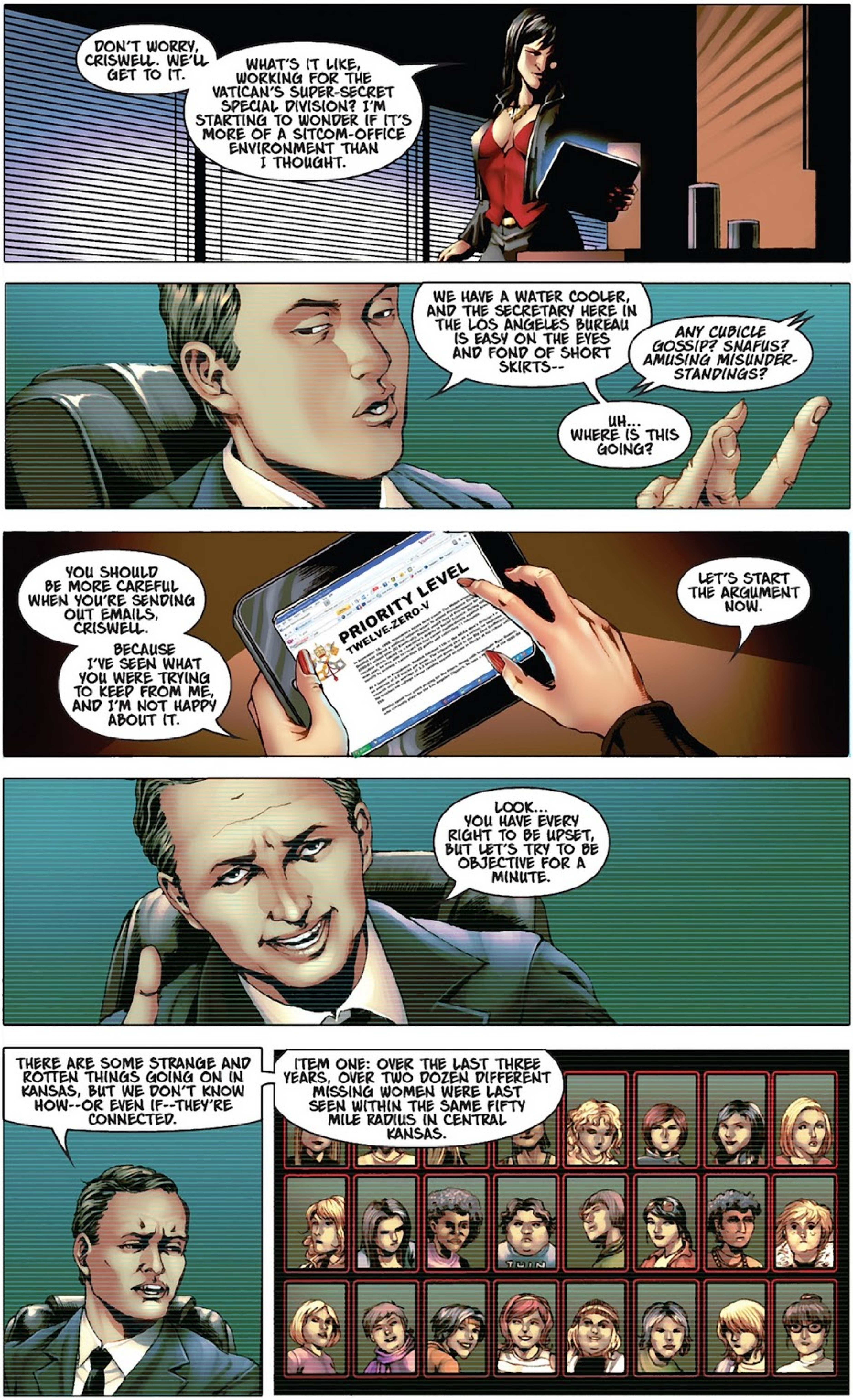
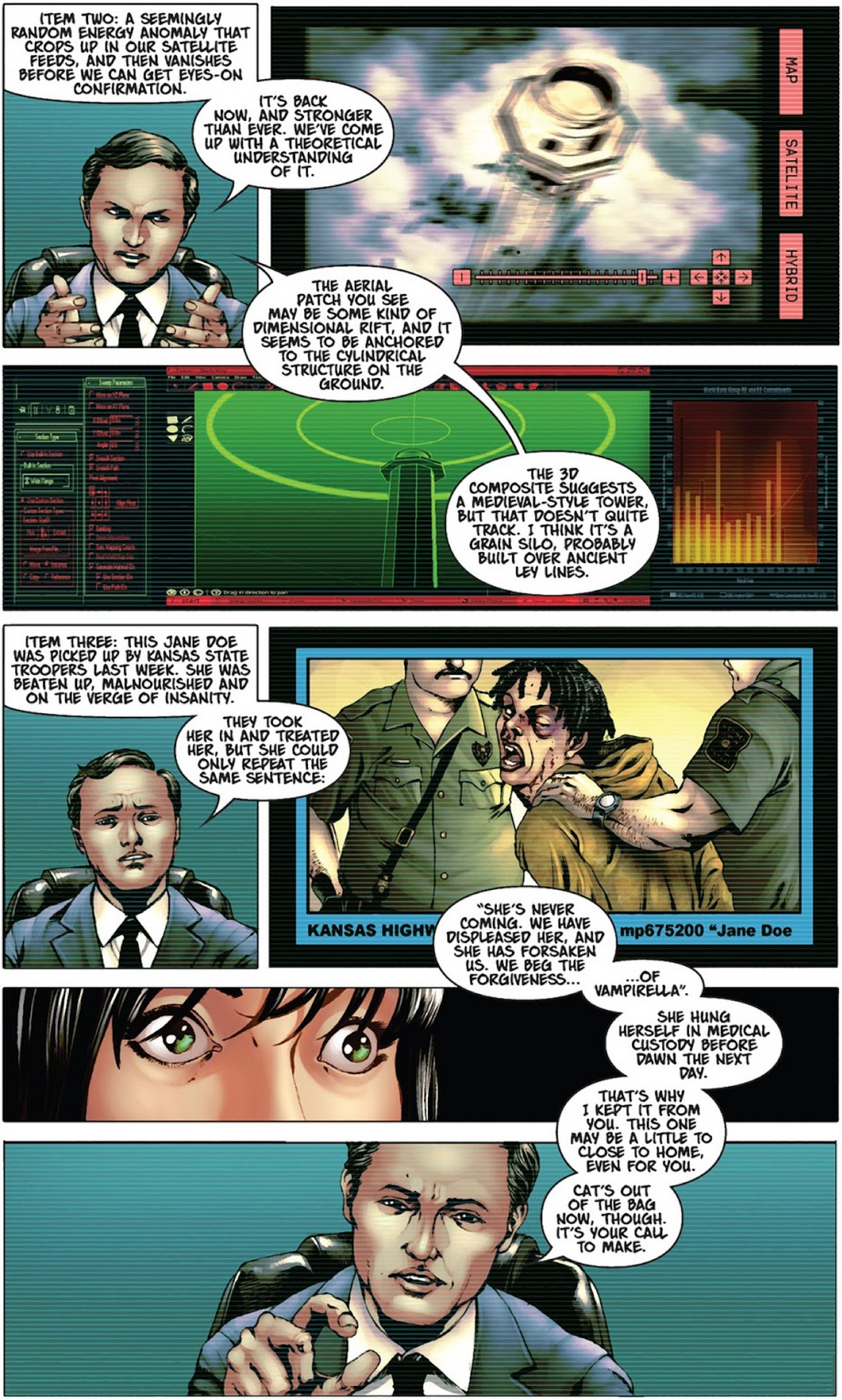
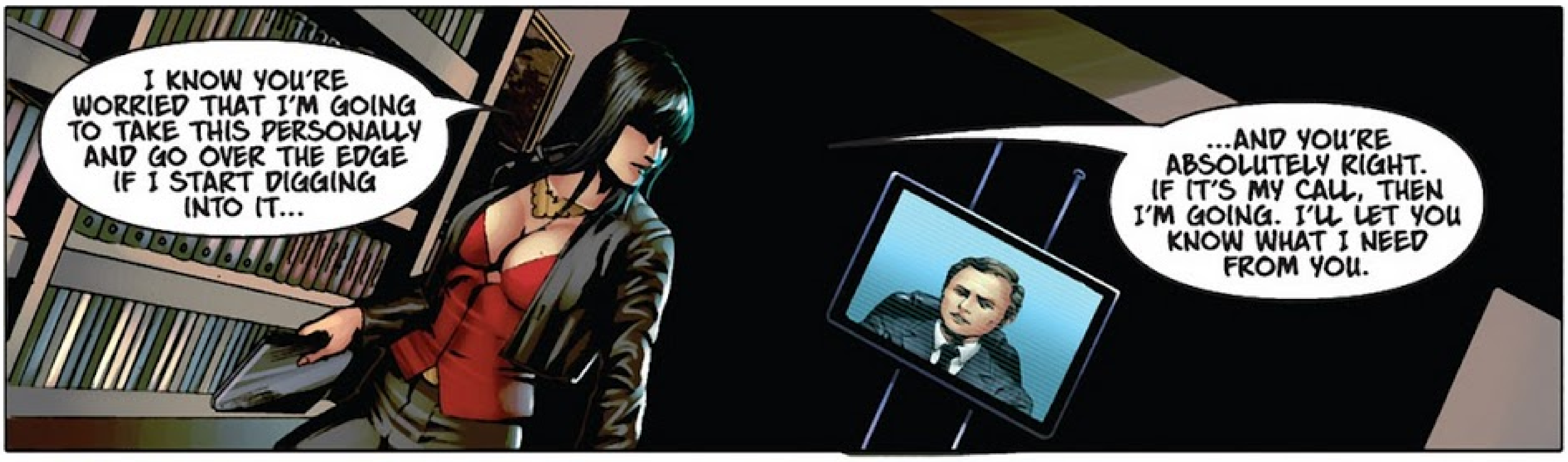
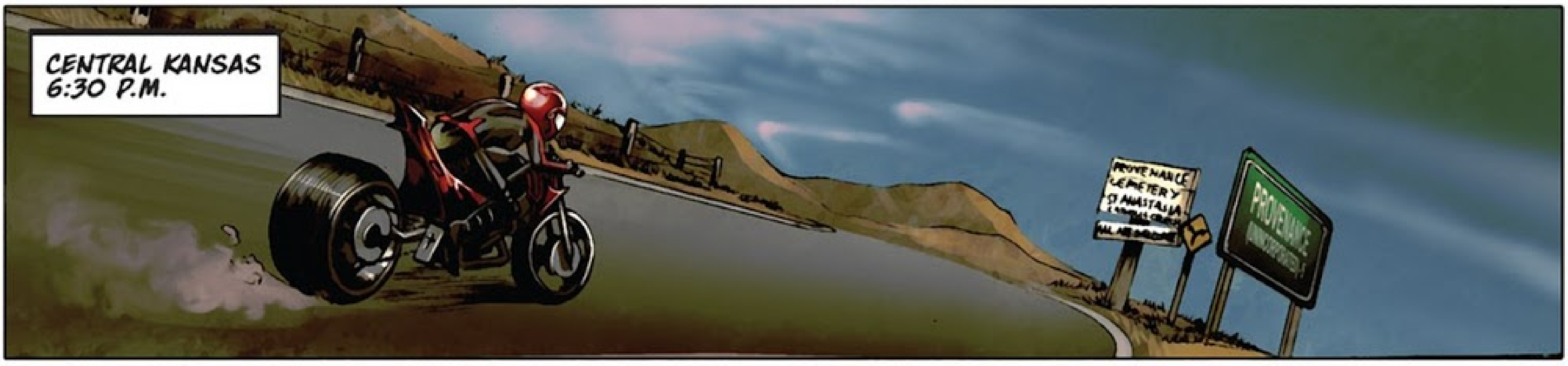
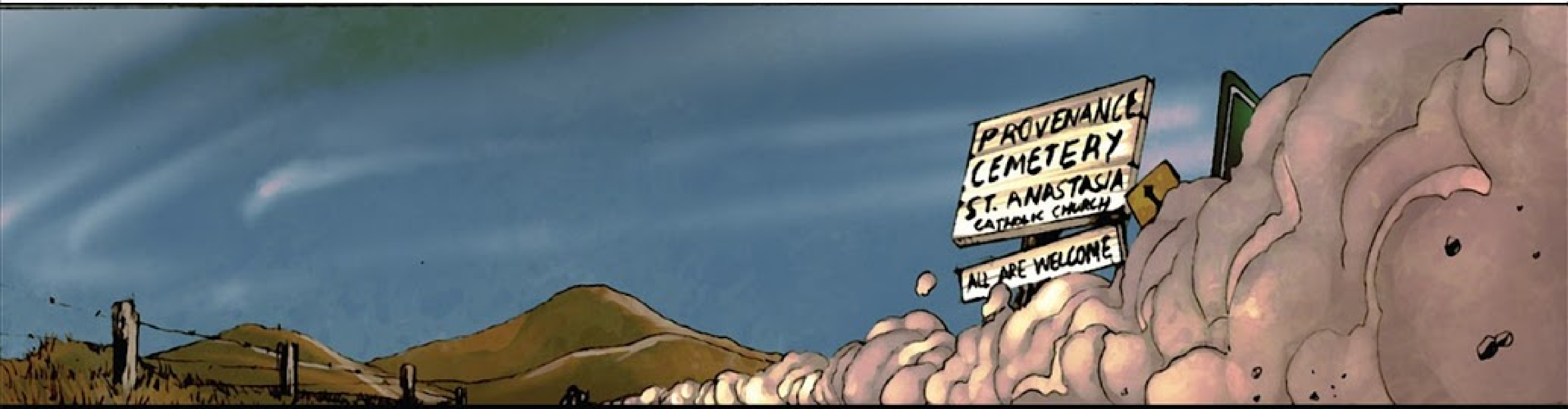

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
24 HOURS EARLIER
MAYBE I'M NOT EXPLAINING MYSELF PROPERLY. LET'S TRY AGAIN:
I'M GIVING YOU ONE CHANCE TO COME CLEAN, AND AVOID AN ARGUMENT THAT YOU HAVE NO PRAYER OF WINNING.
"NO PRAYER," VAMPIRELLA? REALLY?
I'M GUESSING YOU WOULDN'T HAVE MADE THAT JOKE TO MY SUPERIOR. SPEAKING OF HERR SCHULD, HE SENDS HIS REGARDS.
AS FAR AS "COMING CLEAN", I WISH I KNEW WHAT YOU WERE REFERRING TO. SHALL WE START THE ARGUMENT?

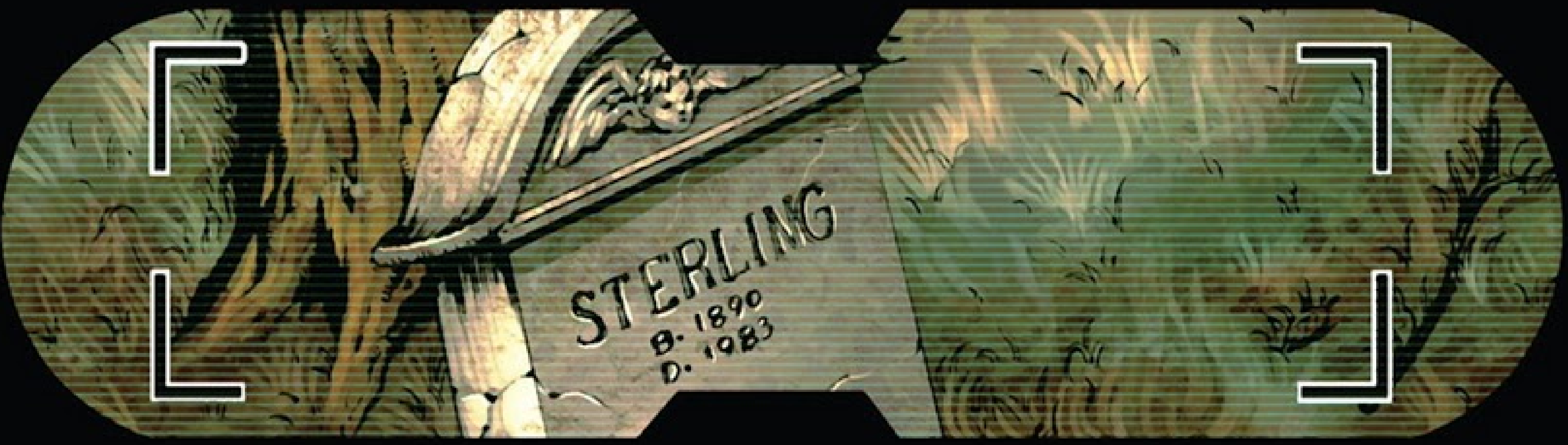

DON'T WORRY, CRISWELL. WE'LL GET TO IT.
WHAT'S IT LIKE, WORKING FOR THE VATICAN'S SUPER-SECRET SPECIAL DIVISION? I'M STARTING TO WONDER IF IT'S MORE OF A SITCOM-OFFICE ENVIRONMENT THAN I THOUGHT.
WE HAVE A WATER COOLER, AND THE SECRETARY HERE IN THE LOS ANGELES BUREAU IS EASY ON THE EYES AND FOND OF SHORT SKIRTS--
ANY CUBICLE GOSSIP? SNAFUS? AMUSING MISUNDERSTANDINGS?
UH... WHERE IS THIS GOING?
YOU SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL WHEN YOU'RE SENDING OUT EMAILS, CRISWELL.
BECAUSE I'VE SEEN WHAT YOU WERE TRYING TO KEEP FROM ME, AND I'M NOT HAPPY ABOUT IT.
PRIORITY LEVEL TWELVE-ZERO-V
LET'S START THE ARGUMENT NOW.
LOOK... YOU HAVE EVERY RIGHT TO BE UPSET, BUT LET'S TRY TO BE OBJECTIVE FOR A MINUTE.
THERE ARE SOME STRANGE AND ROTTEN THINGS GOING ON IN KANSAS, BUT WE DON'T KNOW HOW--OR EVEN IF--THEY'RE CONNECTED.
ITEM ONE: OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS, OVER TWO DOZEN DIFFERENT MISSING WOMEN WERE LAST SEEN WITHIN THE SAME FIFTY MILE RADIUS IN CENTRAL KANSAS.
TWIN

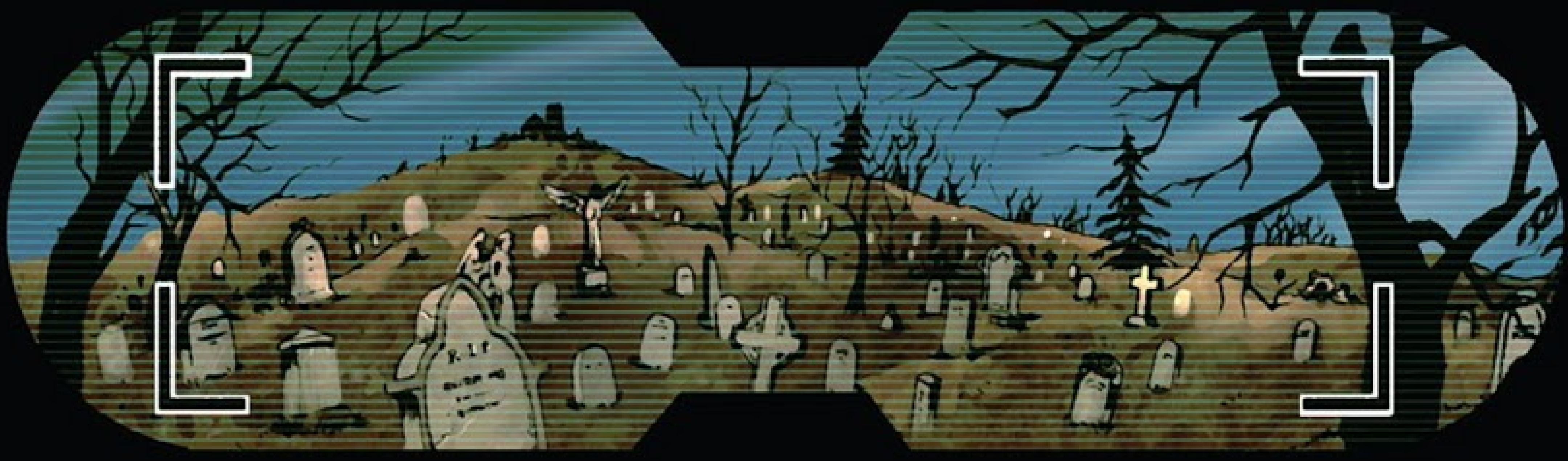

ITEM TWO: A SEEMINGLY RANDOM ENERGY ANOMALY THAT CROPS UP IN OUR SATELLITE FEEDS, AND THEN VANISHES BEFORE WE CAN GET EYES-ON CONFIRMATION.
IT'S BACK NOW, AND STRONGER THAN EVER. WE'VE COME UP WITH A THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING OF IT.
MAP
SATELITE
HYBRID
THE AERIAL PATCH YOU SEE MAY BE SOME KIND OF DIMENSIONAL RIFT, AND IT SEEMS TO BE ANCHORED TO THE CYLINDRICAL STRUCTURE ON THE GROUND.
THE 3D COMPOSITE SUGGESTS A MEDIEVAL-STYLE TOWER, BUT THAT DOESN'T QUITE TRACK. I THINK IT'S A GRAIN SILO, PROBABLY BUILT OVER ANCIENT LEY LINES.
ITEM THREE: THIS JANE DOE WAS PICKED UP BY KANSAS STATE TROOPERS LAST WEEK. SHE WAS BEATEN UP, MALNOURISHED AND ON THE VERGE OF INSANITY.
THEY TOOK HER IN AND TREATED HER, BUT SHE COULD ONLY REPEAT THE SAME SENTENCE:
KANSAS HIGHW
mp675200 "Jane Doe
"SHE'S NEVER COMING. WE HAVE DISPLEASED HER, AND SHE HAS FORSAKEN US. WE BEG THE FORGIVENESS...
...OF VAMPIRELLA".
SHE HUNG HERSELF IN MEDICAL CUSTODY BEFORE DAWN THE NEXT DAY.
THAT'S WHY I KEPT IT FROM YOU. THIS ONE MAY BE A LITTLE TO CLOSE TO HOME, EVEN FOR YOU.
CAT'S OUT OF THE BAG NOW, THOUGH. IT'S YOUR CALL TO MAKE.

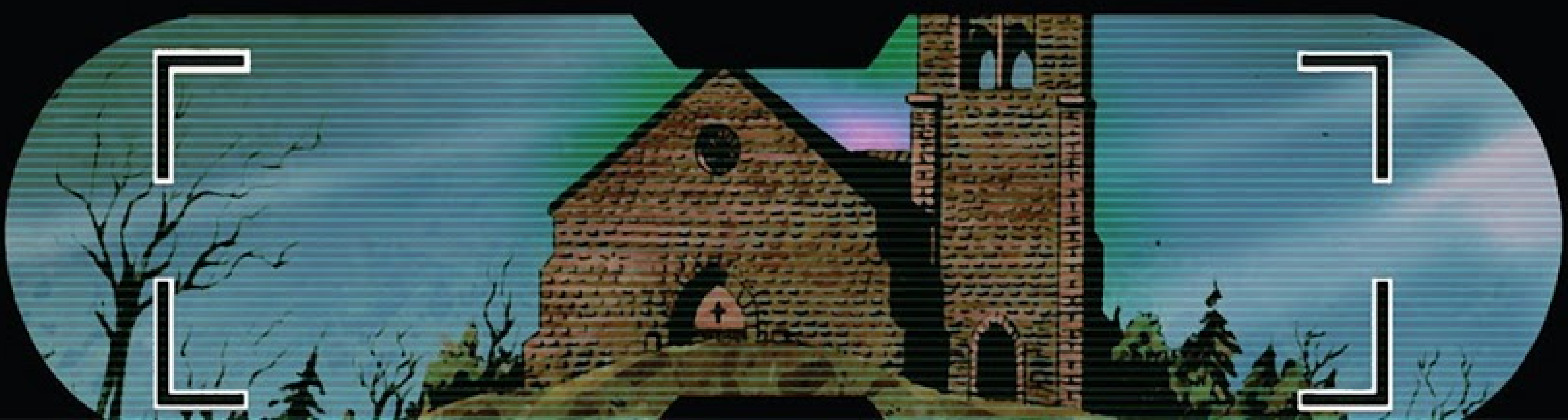

I KNOW YOU'RE WORRIED THAT I'M GOING TO TAKE THIS PERSONALLY AND GO OVER THE EDGE IF I START DIGGING INTO IT...
...AND YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT. IF IT'S MY CALL, THEN I'M GOING. I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHAT I NEED FROM YOU.

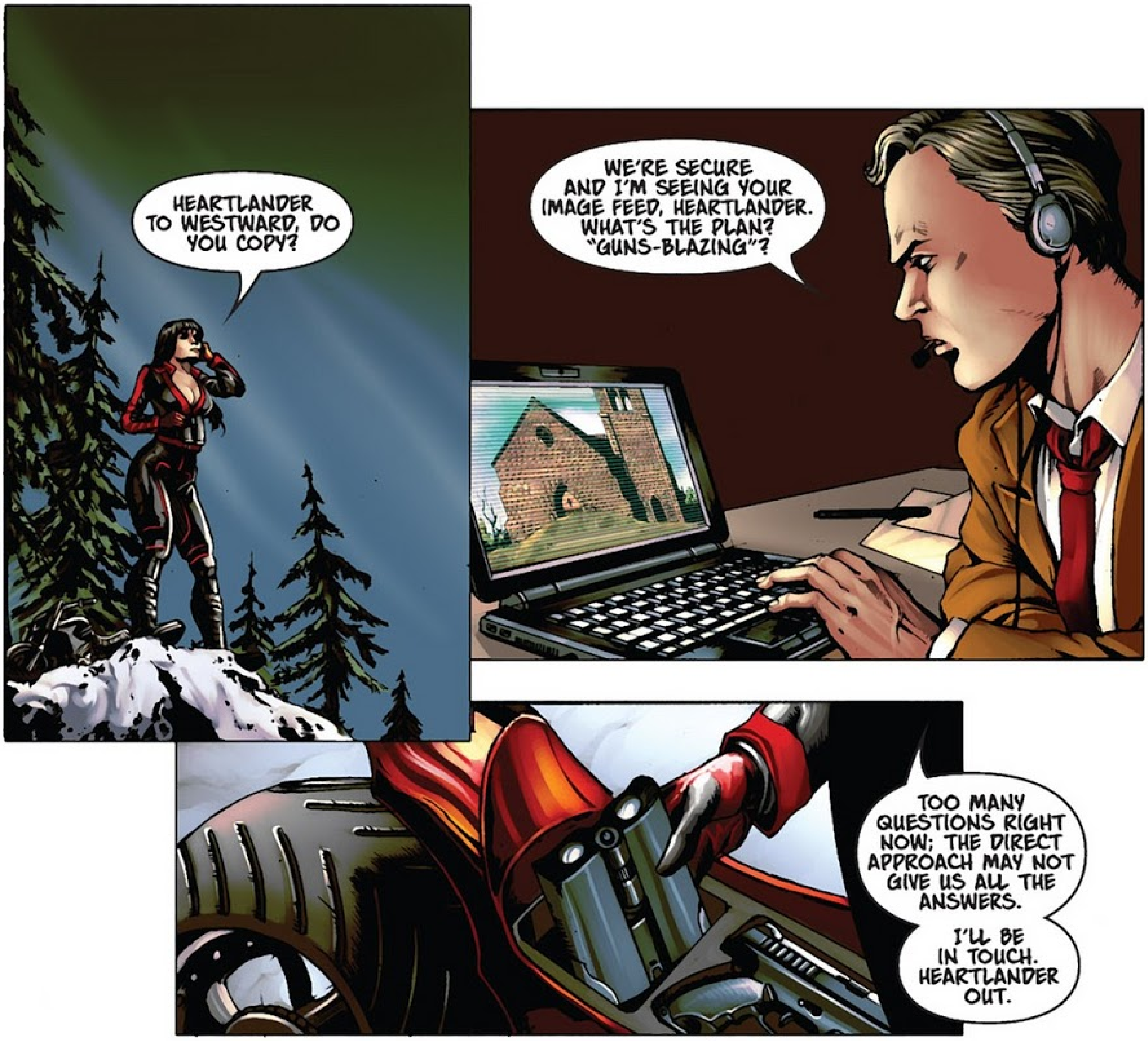

CENTRAL KANSAS
6:30 P.M.
PROVENANCE

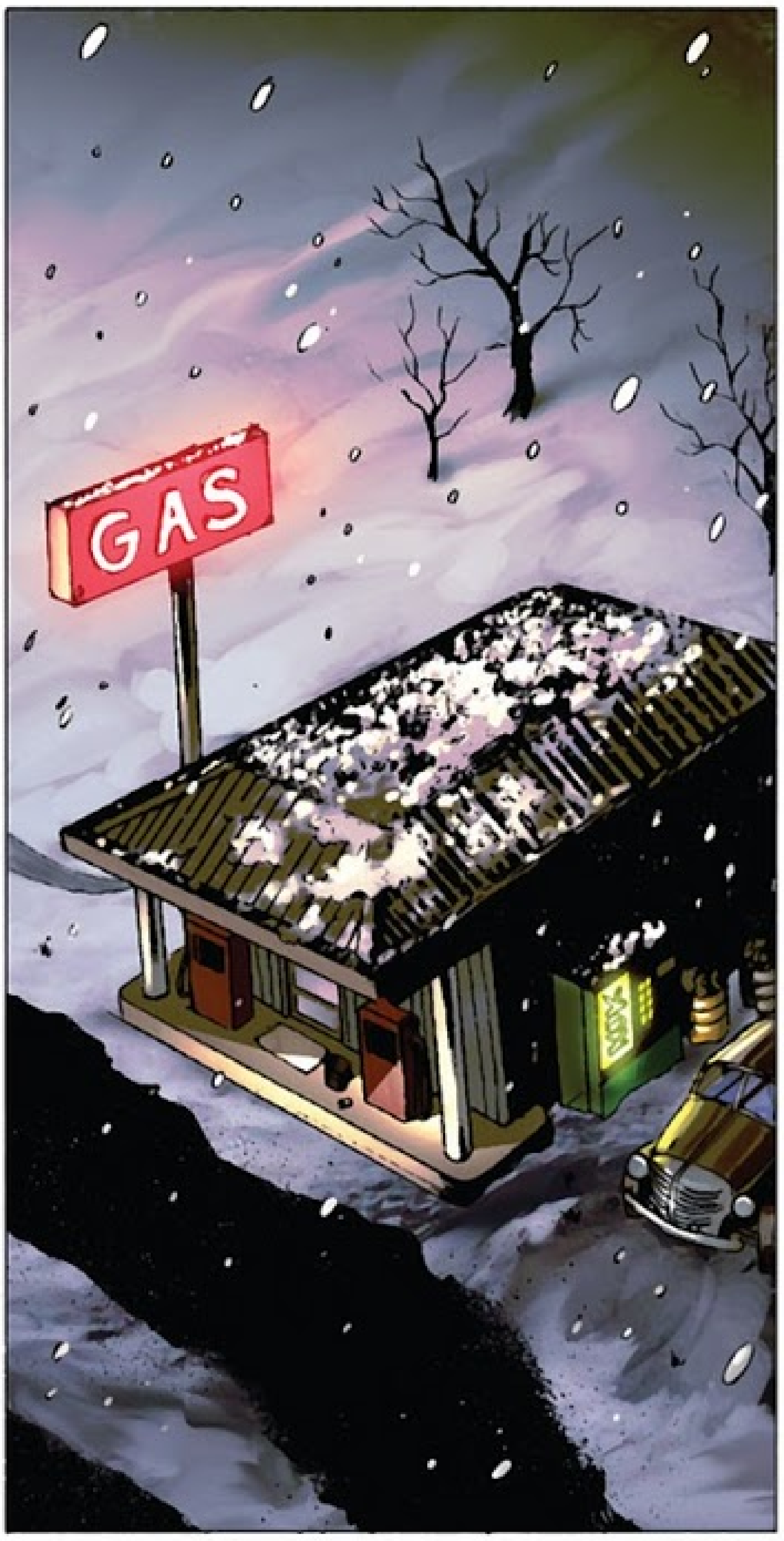

PROVENANCE CEMETERY
ST. ANASTASIA CATHOLIC CHURCH
ALL ARE WELCOME

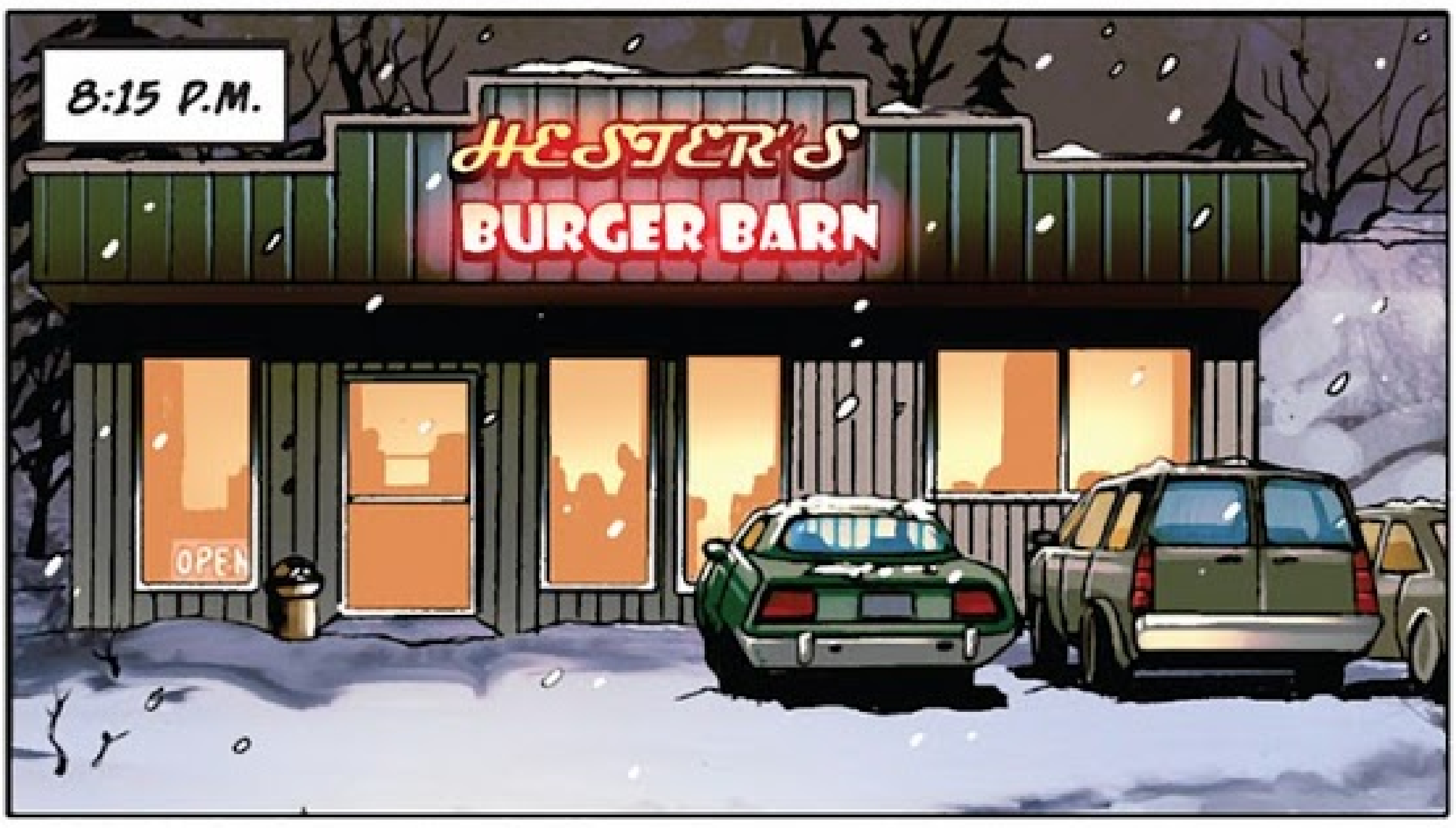

STERLING
B. 1890
D. 1983

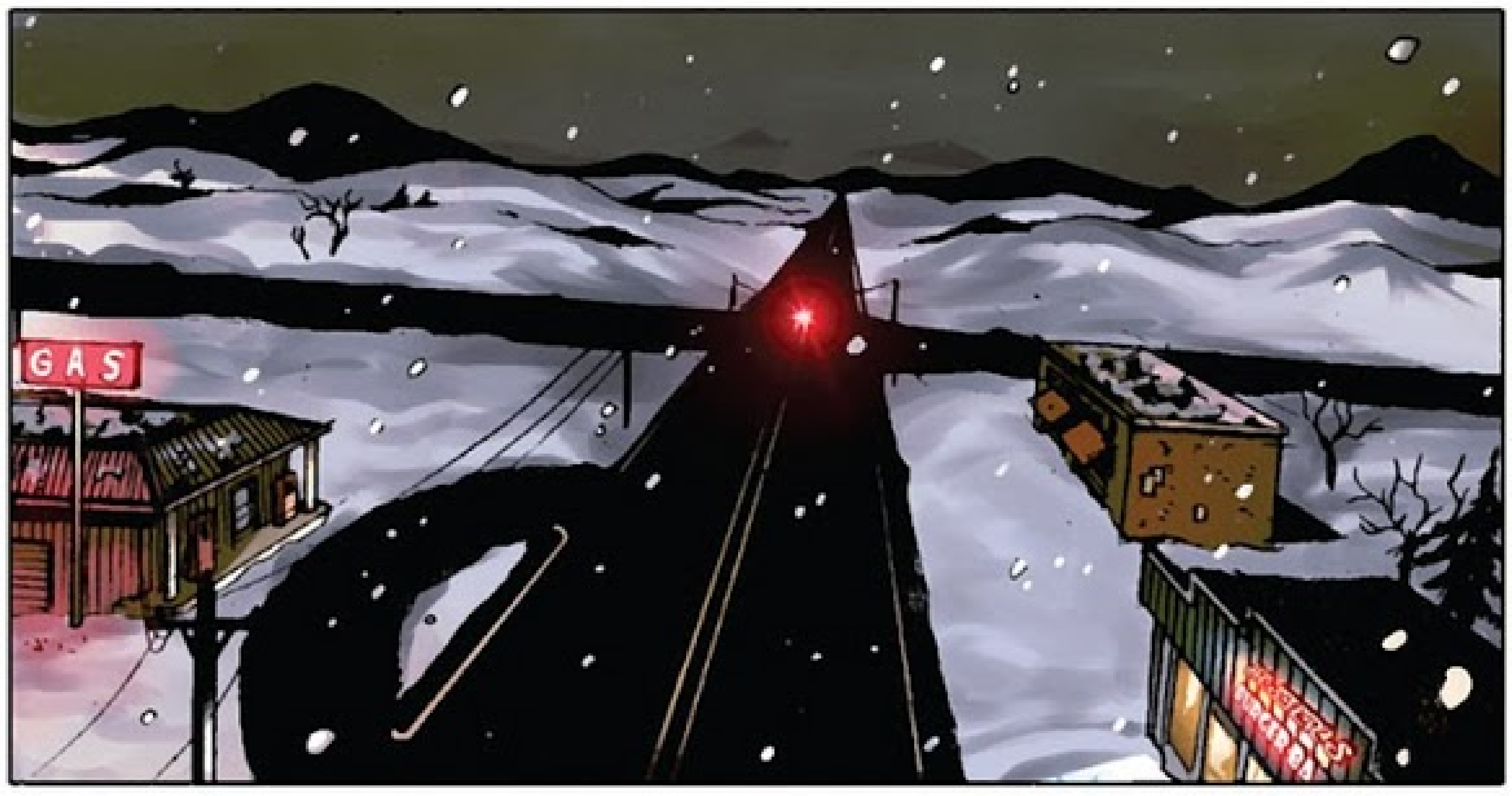


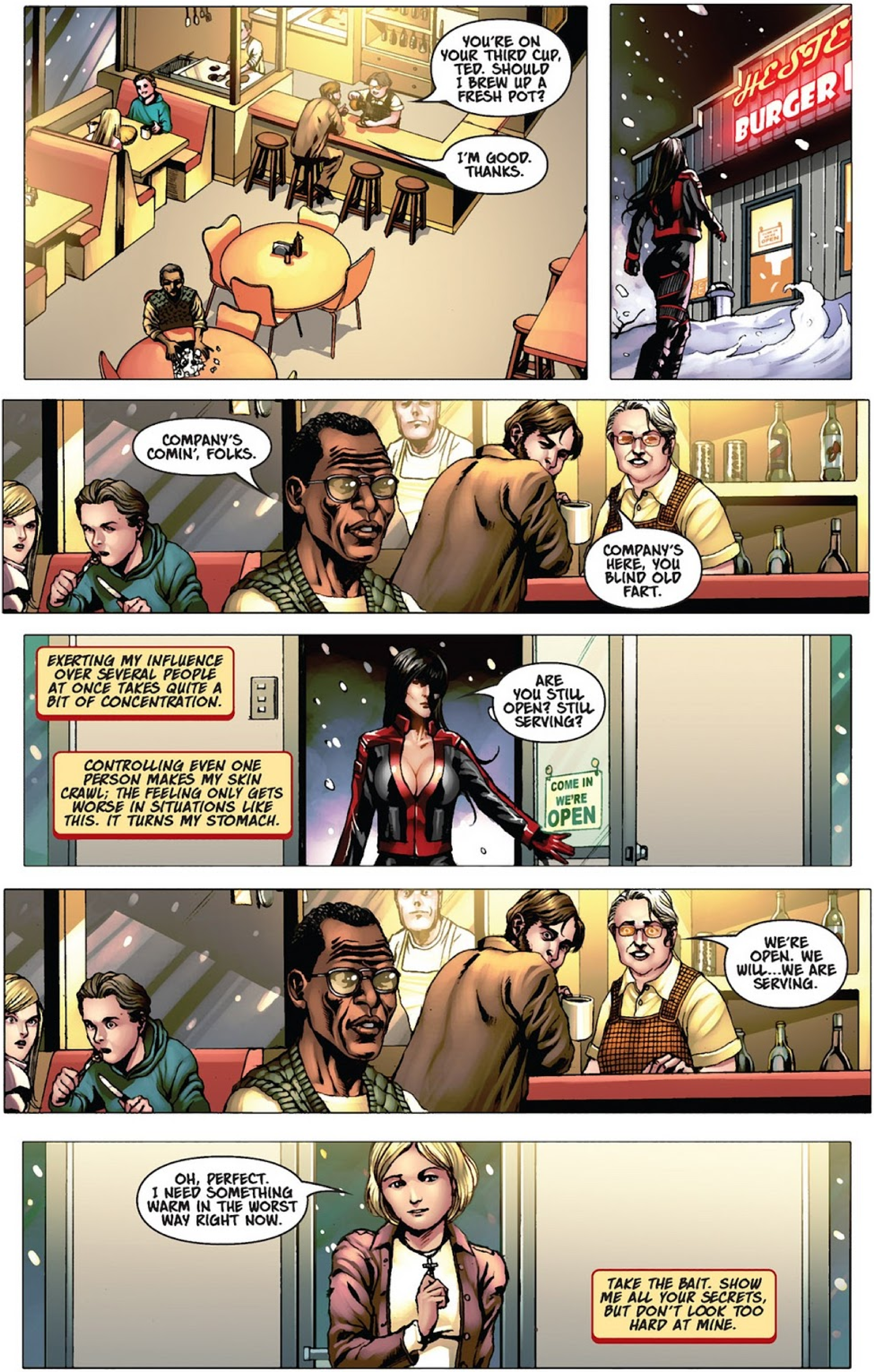


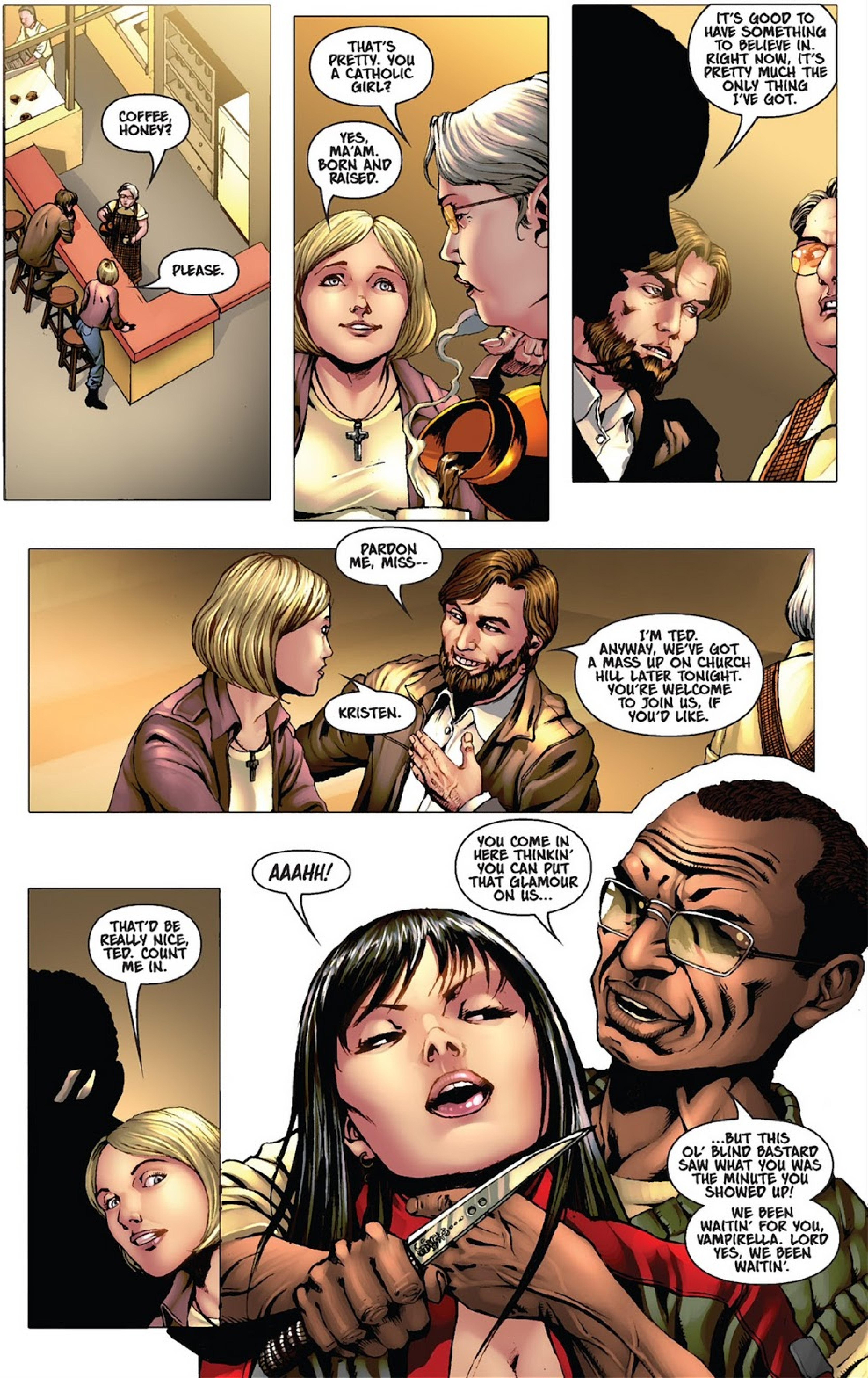

HEARTLANDER TO WESTWARD, DO YOU COPY?
WE'RE SECURE AND I'M SEEING YOUR IMAGE FEED, HEARTLANDER. WHAT'S THE PLAN? "GUNS-BLAZING"?
TOO MANY QUESTIONS RIGHT NOW; THE DIRECT APPROACH MAY NOT GIVE US ALL THE ANSWERS.
I'LL BE IN TOUCH. HEARTLANDER OUT.

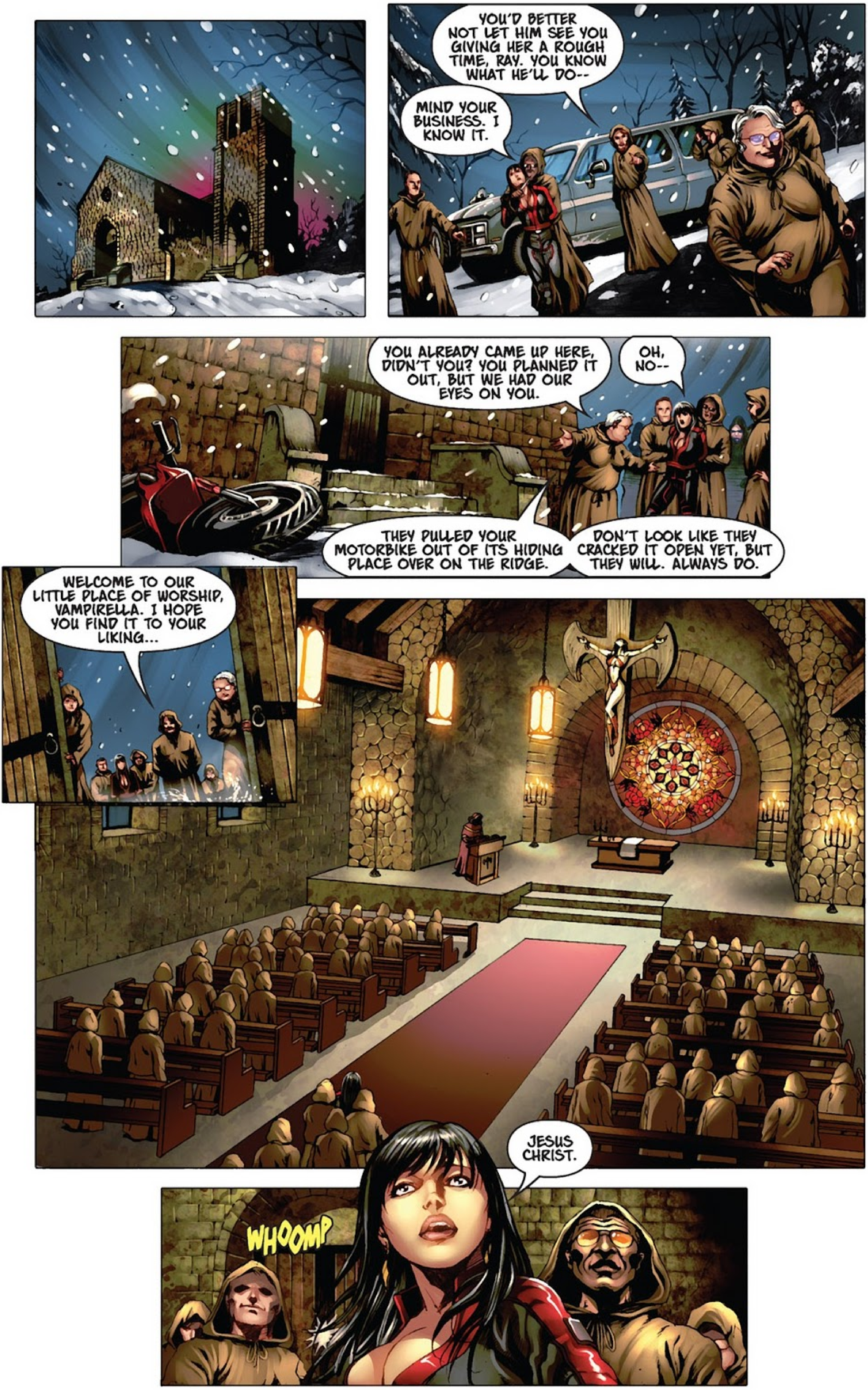

GAS

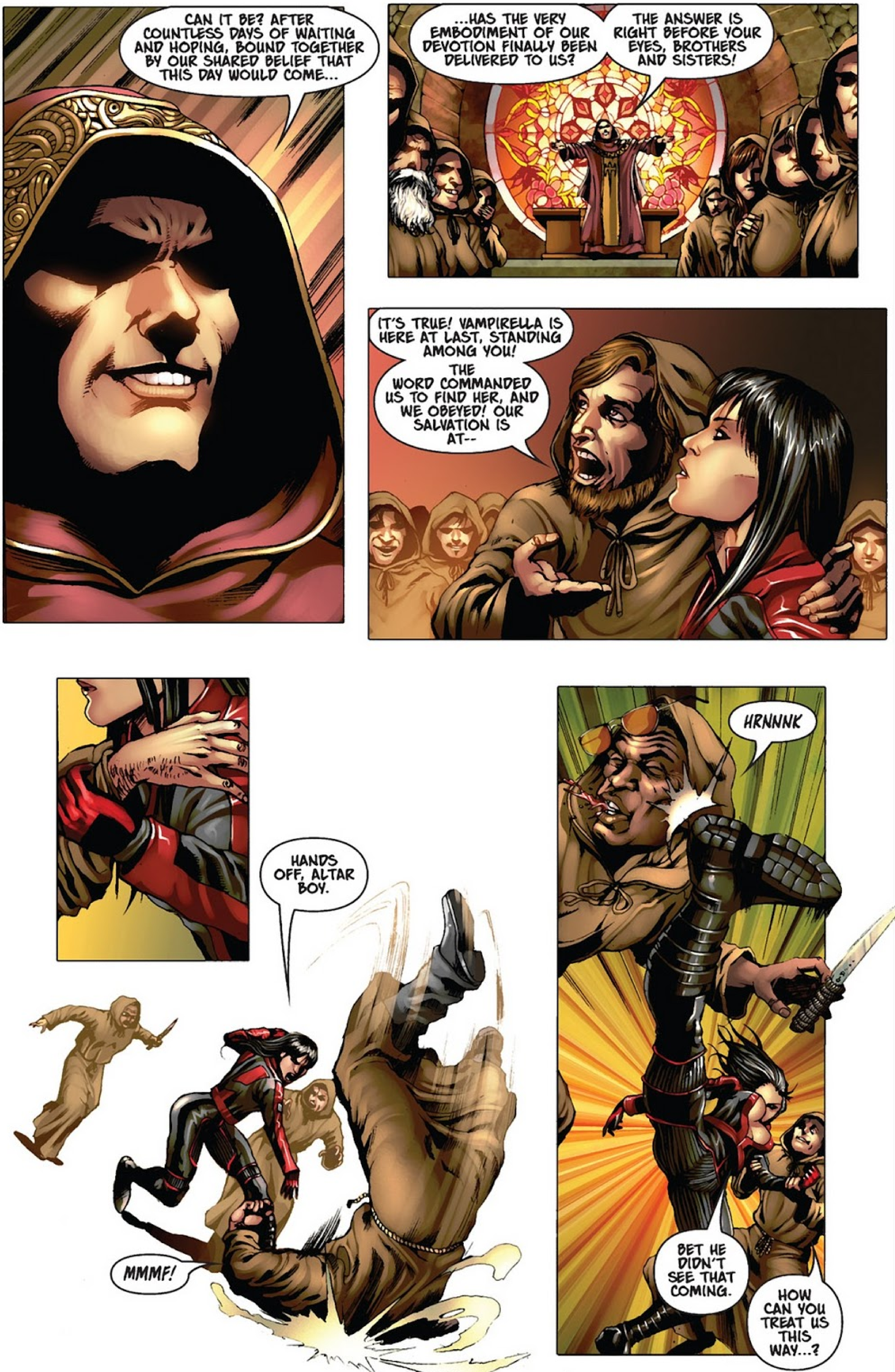

8:15 P.M.
HESTER'S
BURGER BARN
OPEN

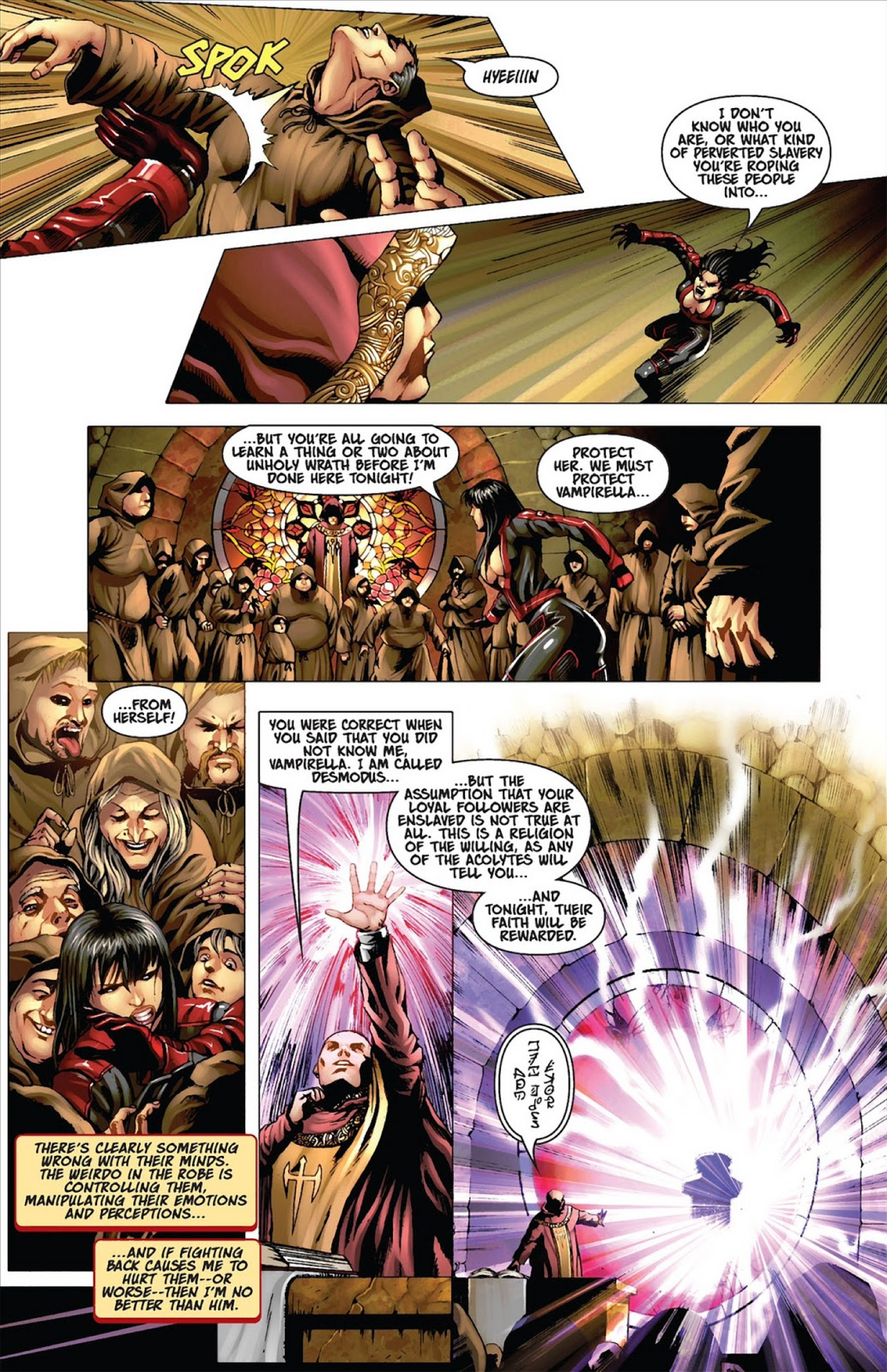

GAS

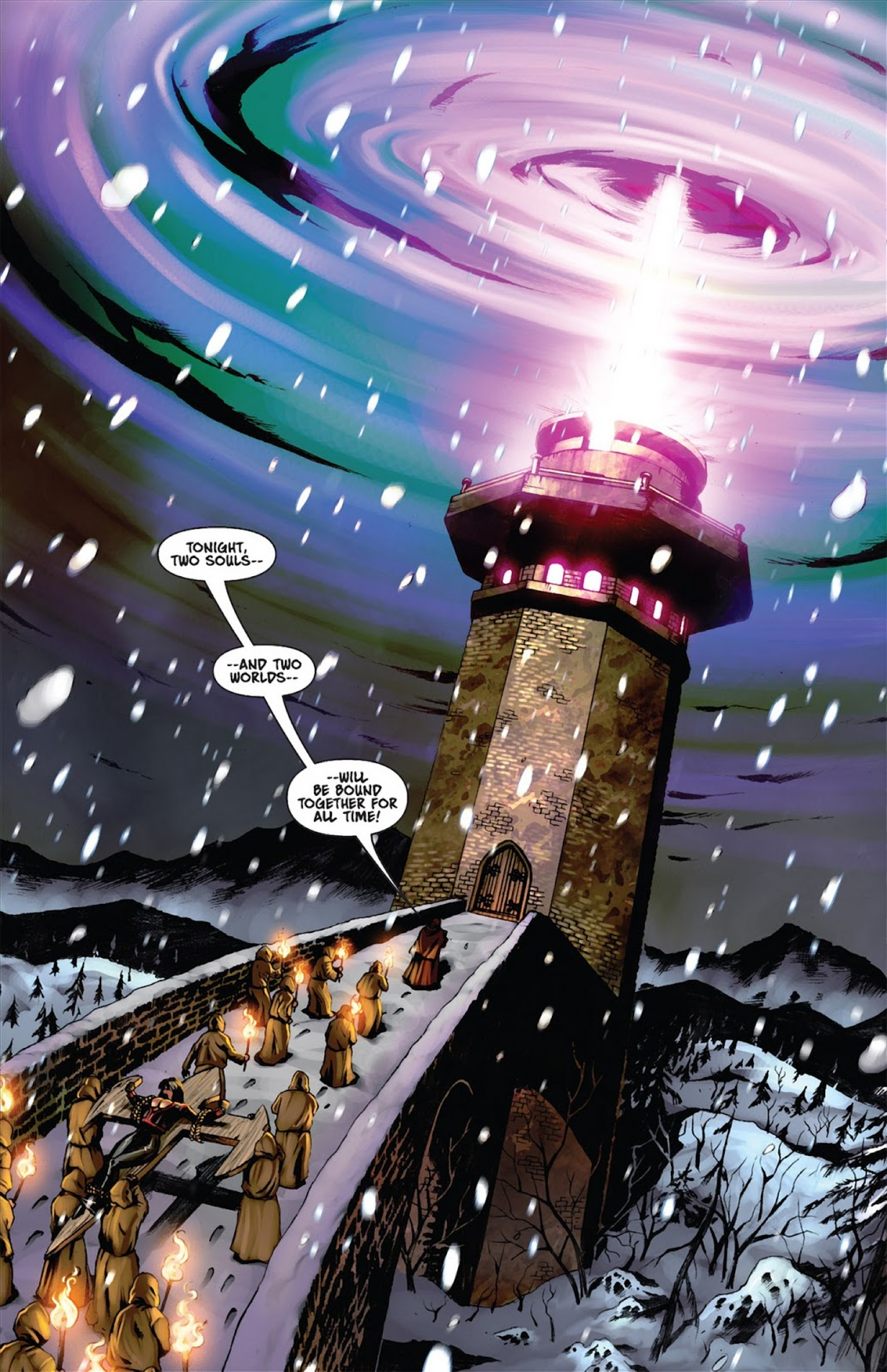

YOU'RE ON YOUR THIRD CUP, TED. SHOULD I BREW UP A FRESH POT?
I'M GOOD. THANKS.
HESTE
BURGER
COMPANY'S COMIN', FOLKS.
COMPANY'S HERE, YOU BLIND OLD FART.
EXERTING MY INFLUENCE OVER SEVERAL PEOPLE AT ONCE TAKES QUITE A BIT OF CONCENTRATION.
CONTROLLING EVEN ONE PERSON MAKES MY SKIN CRAWL; THE FEELING ONLY GETS WORSE IN SITUATIONS LIKE THIS. IT TURNS MY STOMACH.
ARE YOU STILL OPEN? STILL SERVING?
COME IN WE'RE OPEN
WE'RE OPEN. WE WILL...WE ARE SERVING.
OH, PERFECT. I NEED SOMETHING WARM IN THE WORST WAY RIGHT NOW.
TAKE THE BAIT. SHOW ME ALL YOUR SECRETS, BUT DON'T LOOK TOO HARD AT MINE.

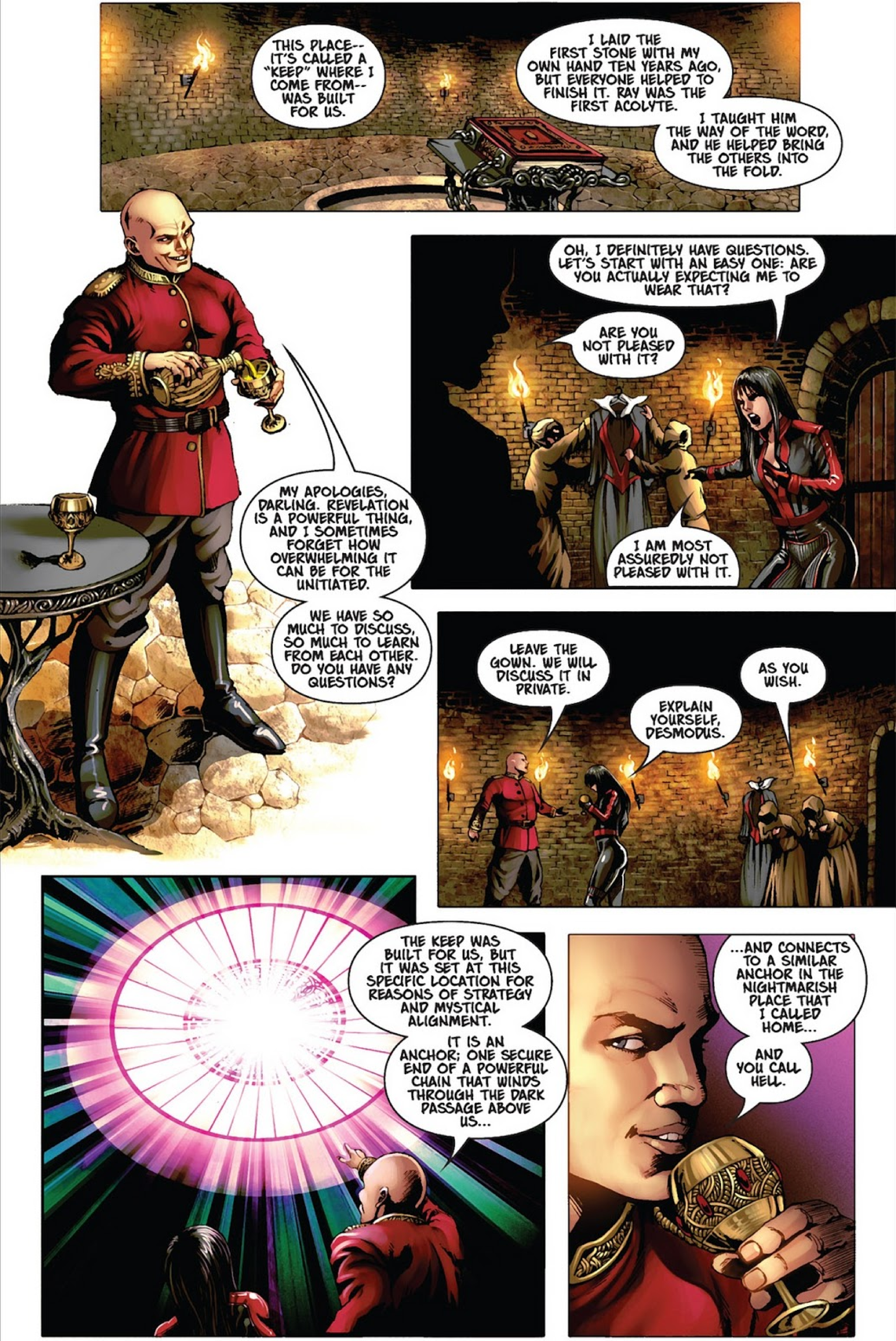

COFFEE, HONEY?
PLEASE.
THAT'S PRETTY. YOU A CATHOLIC GIRL?
YES, MA'AM. BORN AND RAISED.
IT'S GOOD TO HAVE SOMETHING TO BELIEVE IN. RIGHT NOW, IT'S PRETTY MUCH THE ONLY THING I'VE GOT.
PARDON ME, MISS--
KRISTEN.
I'M TED. ANYWAY, WE'VE GOT A MASS UP ON CHURCH HILL LATER TONIGHT. YOU'RE WELCOME TO JOIN US, IF YOU'D LIKE.
THAT'D BE REALLY NICE, TED. COUNT ME IN.
AAAHH!
YOU COME IN HERE THINKIN' YOU CAN PUT THAT GLAMOUR ON US...
...BUT THIS OL' BLIND BASTARD SAW WHAT YOU WAS THE MINUTE YOU SHOWED UP!
WE BEEN WAITIN' FOR YOU, VAMPIRELLA. LORD YES, WE BEEN WAITIN'.

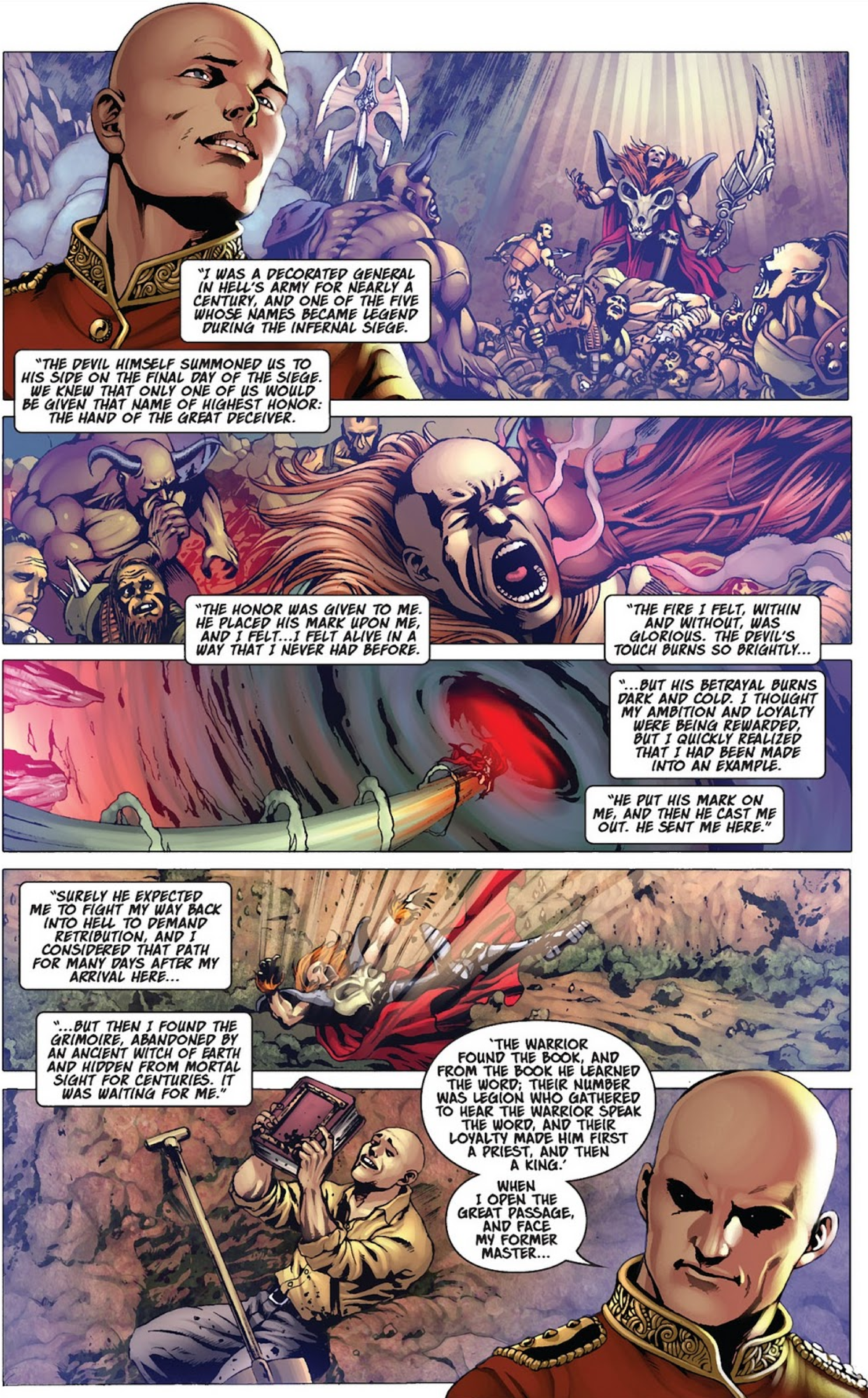

YOU'D BETTER NOT LET HIM SEE YOU GIVING HER A ROUGH TIME, RAY. YOU KNOW WHAT HE'LL DO--
MIND YOUR BUSINESS. I KNOW IT.
YOU ALREADY CAME UP HERE, DIDN'T YOU? YOU PLANNED IT OUT, BUT WE HAD OUR EYES ON YOU.
OH, NO--
THEY PULLED YOUR MOTORBIKE OUT OF ITS HIDING PLACE OVER ON THE RIDGE.
DON'T LOOK LIKE THEY CRACKED IT OPEN YET, BUT THEY WILL. ALWAYS DO.
WELCOME TO OUR LITTLE PLACE OF WORSHIP, VAMPIRELLA. I HOPE YOU FIND IT TO YOUR LIKING...
JESUS CHRIST.
WHOOMP

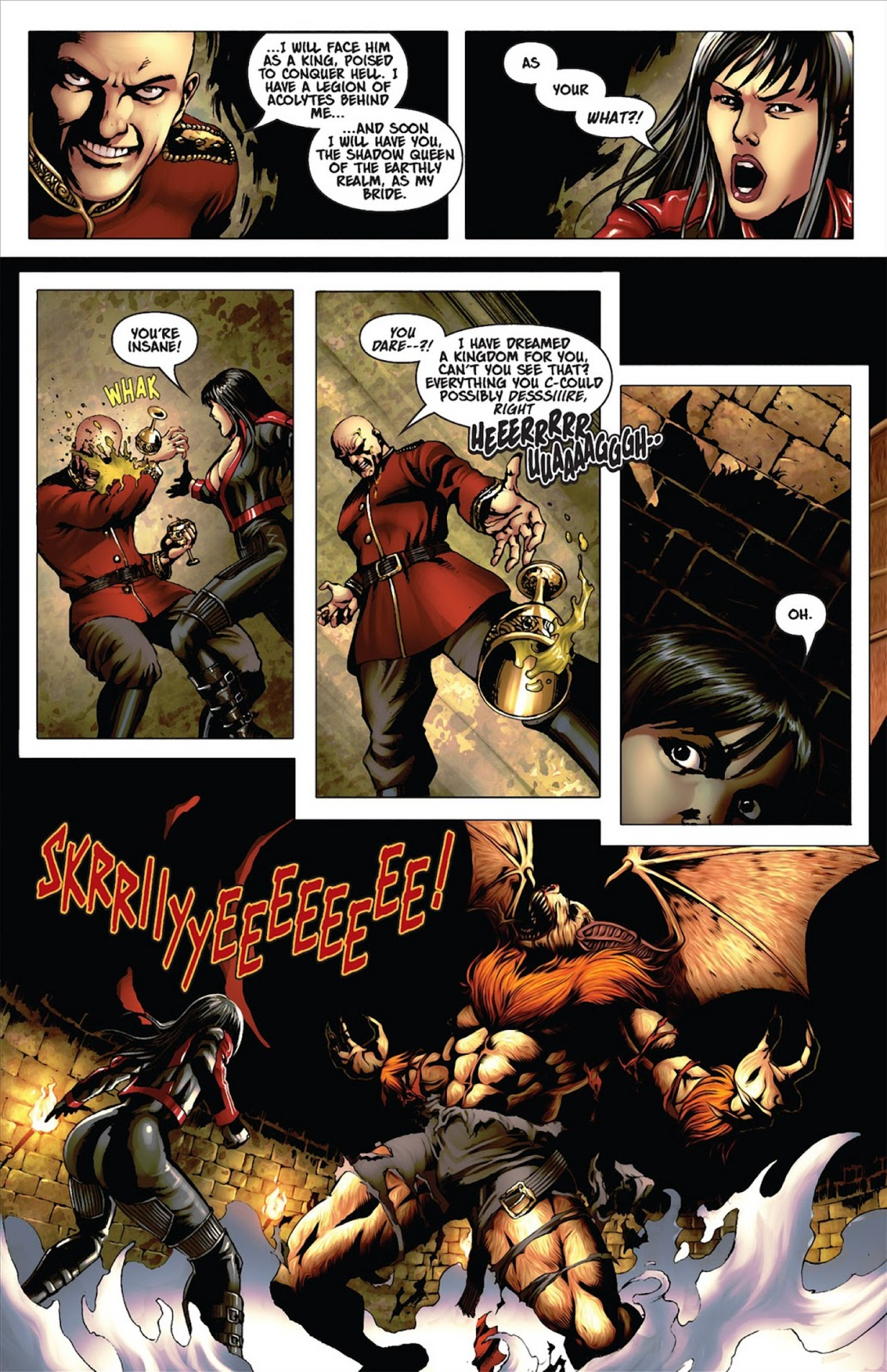

CAN IT BE? AFTER COUNTLESS DAYS OF WAITING AND HOPING, BOUND TOGETHER BY OUR SHARED BELIEF THAT THIS DAY WOULD COME...
...HAS THE VERY EMBODIMENT OF OUR DEVOTION FINALLY BEEN DELIVERED TO US?
THE ANSWER IS RIGHT BEFORE YOUR EYES, BROTHERS AND SISTERS!
IT'S TRUE! VAMPIRELLA IS HERE AT LAST, STANDING AMONG YOU!
THE WORD COMMANDED US TO FIND HER, AND WE OBEYED! OUR SALVATION IS AT--
HANDS OFF, ALTAR BOY.
MMMF!
HRNNNK
BET HE DIDN'T SEE THAT COMING.
HOW CAN YOU TREAT US THIS WAY...?

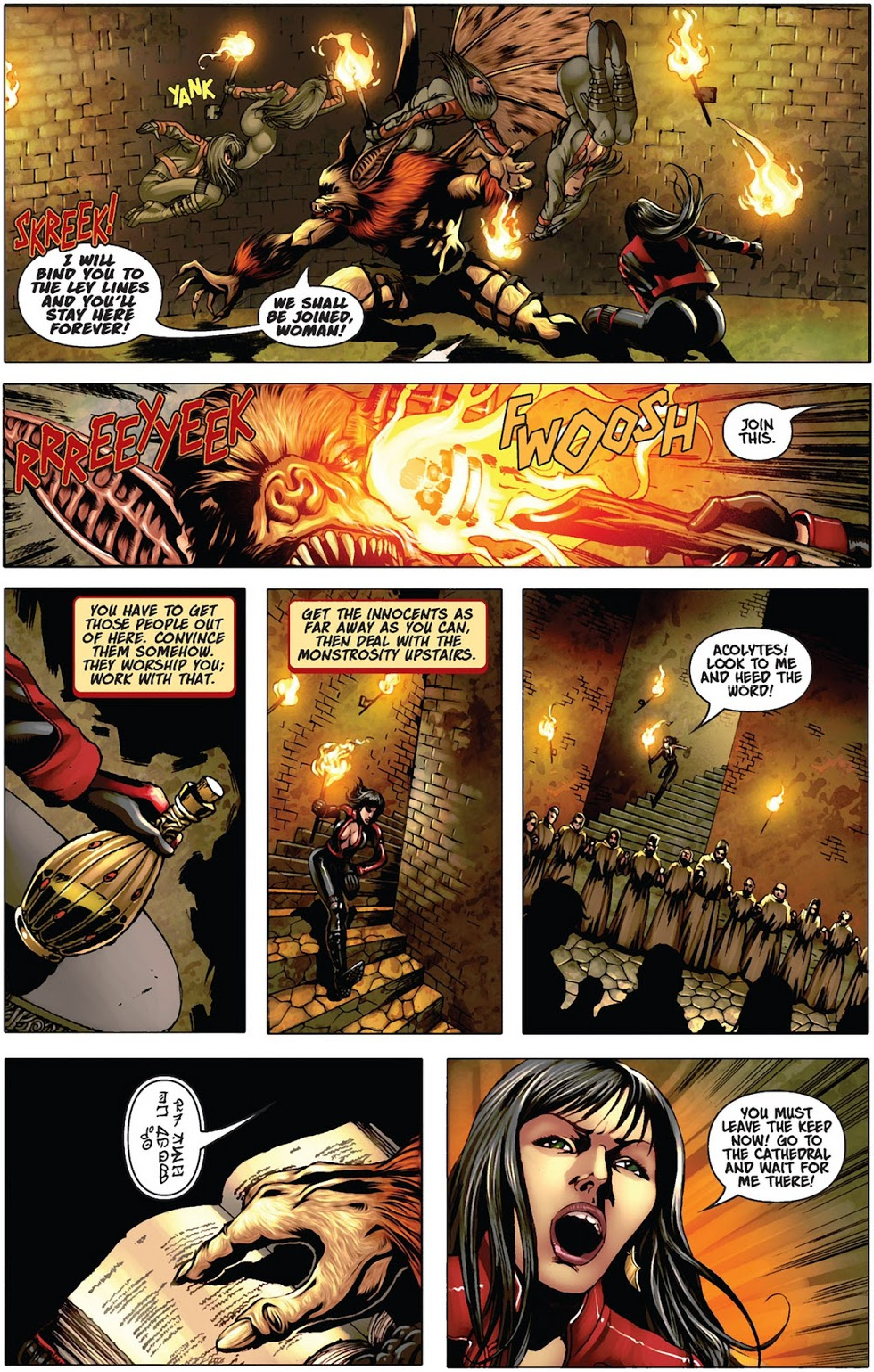

SPOK
HYEEIIIN
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, OR WHAT KIND OF PERVERTED SLAVERY YOU'RE ROPING THESE PEOPLE INTO...
...BUT YOU'RE ALL GOING TO LEARN A THING OR TWO ABOUT UNHOLY WRATH BEFORE I'M DONE HERE TONIGHT!
PROTECT HER. WE MUST PROTECT VAMPIRELLA...
...FROM HERSELF!
THERE'S CLEARLY SOMETHING WRONG WITH THEIR MINDS. THE WEIRDO IN THE ROBE IS CONTROLLING THEM, MANIPULATING THEIR EMOTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS...
...AND IF FIGHTING BACK CAUSES ME TO HURT THEM--OR WORSE--THEN I'M NO BETTER THAN HIM.
YOU WERE CORRECT WHEN YOU SAID THAT YOU DID NOT KNOW ME, VAMPIRELLA. I AM CALLED DESMODUS...
...BUT THE ASSUMPTION THAT YOUR LOYAL FOLLOWERS ARE ENSLAVED IS NOT TRUE AT ALL. THIS IS A RELIGION OF THE WILLING, AS ANY OF THE ACOLYTES WILL TELL YOU...
...AND TONIGHT, THEIR FAITH WILL BE REWARDED.

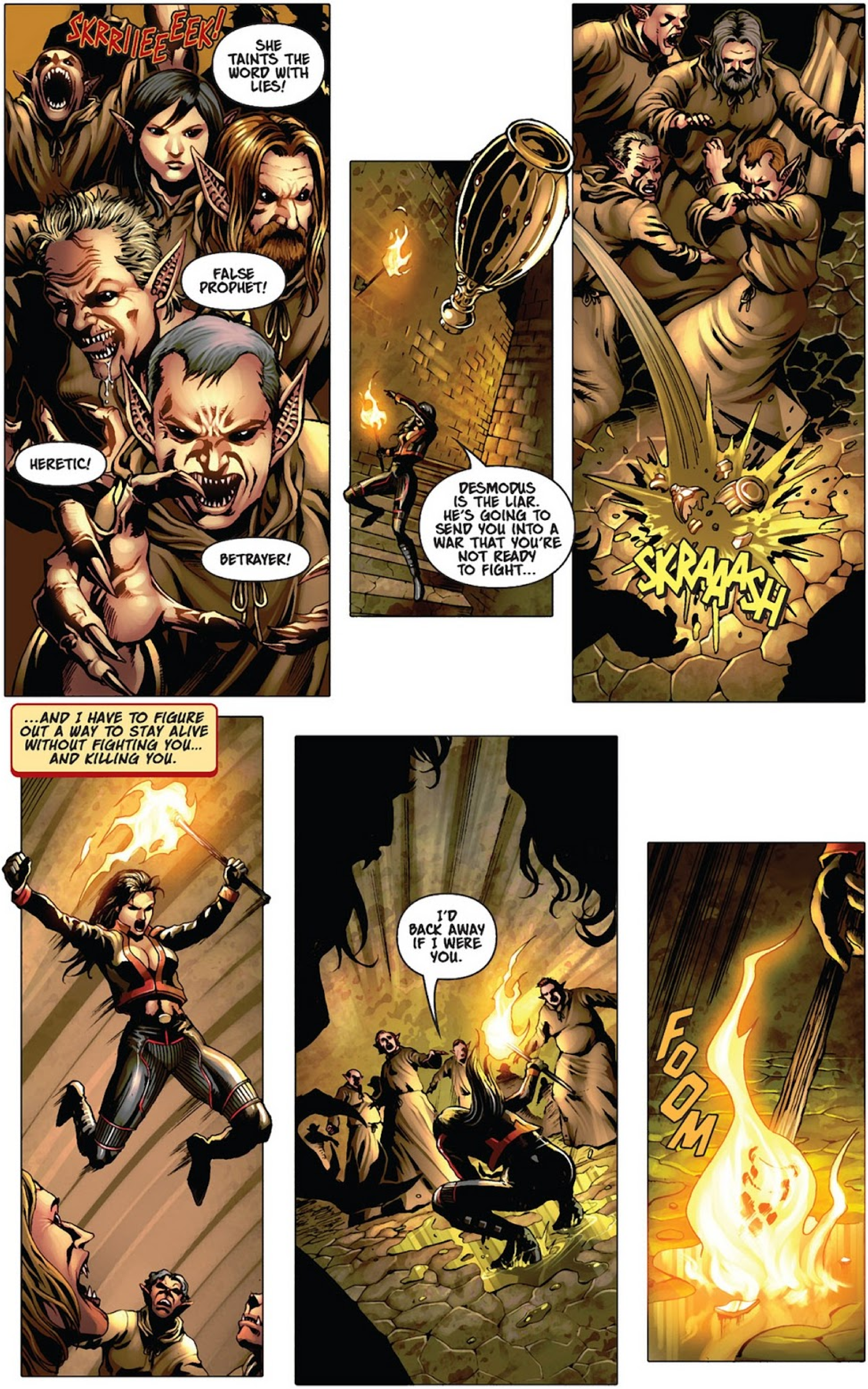

TONIGHT, TWO SOULS--
--AND TWO WORLDS--
--WILL BE BOUND TOGETHER FOR ALL TIME!

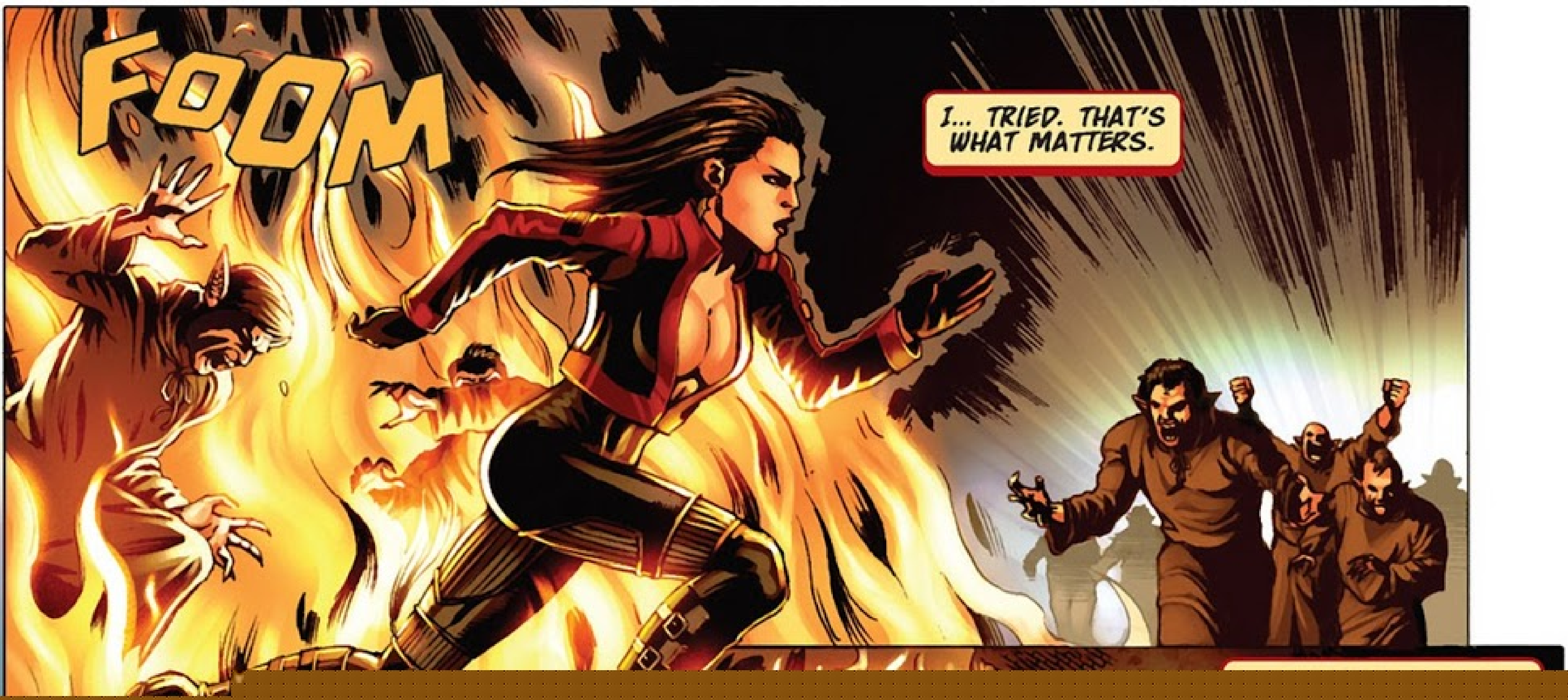

THIS PLACE--IT'S CALLED A "KEEP" WHERE I COME FROM--WAS BUILT FOR US.
I LAID THE FIRST STONE WITH MY OWN HAND TEN YEARS AGO, BUT EVERYONE HELPED TO FINISH IT. RAY WAS THE FIRST ACOLYTE.
I TAUGHT HIM THE WAY OF THE WORD, AND HE HELPED BRING THE OTHERS INTO THE FOLD.
MY APOLOGIES, DARLING. REVELATION IS A POWERFUL THING, AND I SOMETIMES FORGET HOW OVERWHELMING IT CAN BE FOR THE UNITIATED.
WE HAVE SO MUCH TO DISCUSS, SO MUCH TO LEARN FROM EACH OTHER. DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?
OH, I DEFINITELY HAVE QUESTIONS. LET'S START WITH AN EASY ONE: ARE YOU ACTUALLY EXPECTING ME TO WEAR THAT?
ARE YOU NOT PLEASED WITH IT?
I AM MOST ASSUREDLY NOT PLEASED WITH IT.
LEAVE THE GOWN. WE WILL DISCUSS IT IN PRIVATE.
AS YOU WISH.
EXPLAIN YOURSELF, DESMODUS.
THE KEEP WAS BUILT FOR US, BUT IT WAS SET AT THIS SPECIFIC LOCATION FOR REASONS OF STRATEGY AND MYSTICAL ALIGNMENT.
IT IS AN ANCHOR; ONE SECURE END OF A POWERFUL CHAIN THAT WINDS THROUGH THE DARK PASSAGE ABOVE US...
...AND CONNECTS TO A SIMILAR ANCHOR IN THE NIGHTMARISH PLACE THAT I CALLED HOME...
AND YOU CALL HELL.

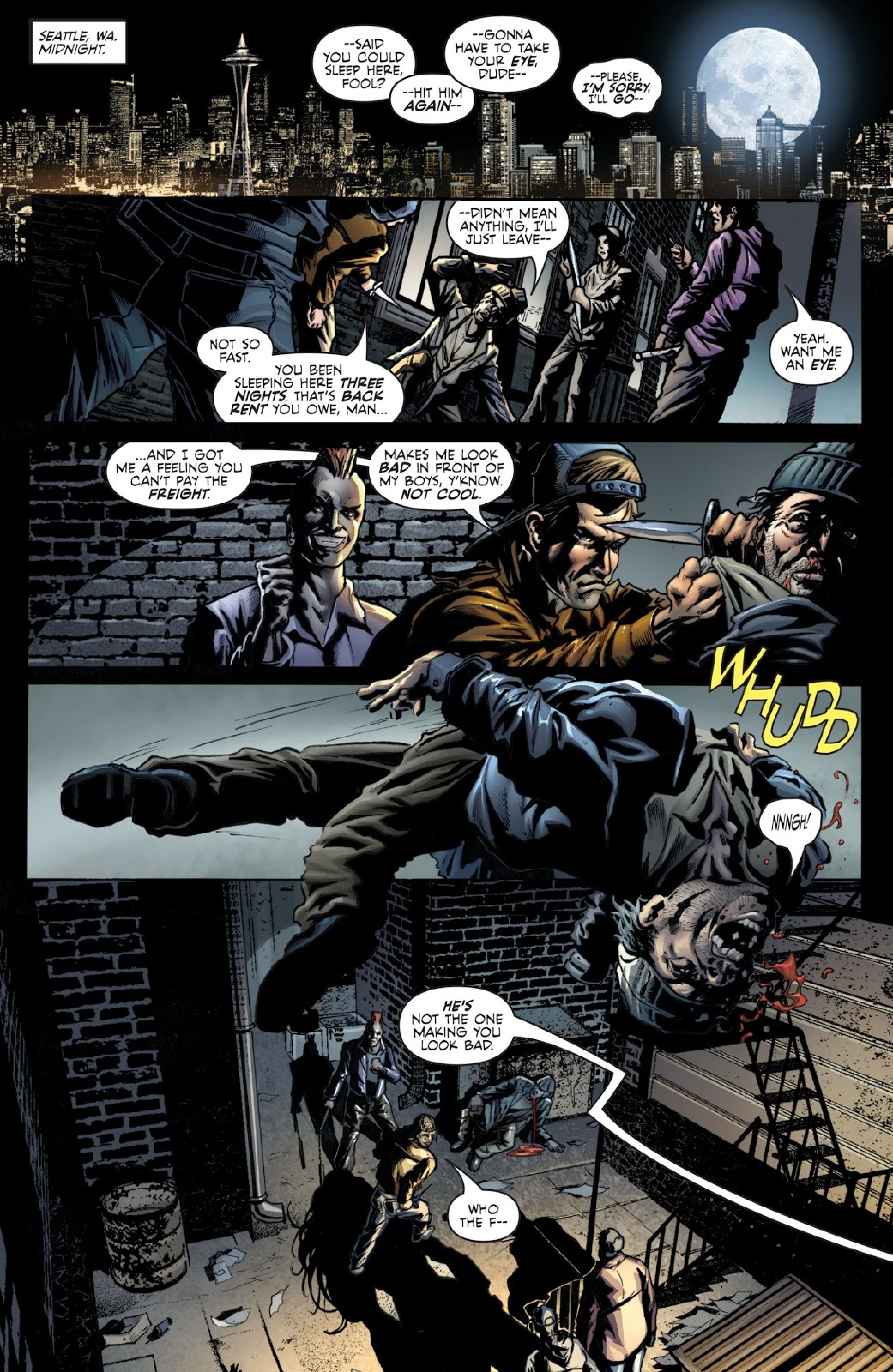

"I WAS A DECORATED GENERAL IN HELL'S ARMY FOR NEARLY A CENTURY, AND ONE OF THE FIVE WHOSE NAMES BECAME LEGEND DURING THE INFERNAL SIEGE.
"THE DEVIL HIMSELF SUMMONED US TO HIS SIDE ON THE FINAL DAY OF THE SIEGE. WE KNEW THAT ONLY ONE OF US WOULD BE GIVEN THAT NAME OF HIGHEST HONOR: THE HAND OF THE GREAT DECEIVER.
"THE HONOR WAS GIVEN TO ME. HE PLACED HIS MARK UPON ME, AND I FELT...I FELT ALIVE IN A WAY THAT I NEVER HAD BEFORE.
"THE FIRE I FELT, WITHIN AND WITHOUT, WAS GLORIOUS. THE DEVIL'S TOUCH BURNS SO BRIGHTLY...
"...BUT HIS BETRAYAL BURNS DARK AND COLD. I THOUGHT MY AMBITION AND LOYALTY WERE BEING REWARDED, BUT I QUICKLY REALIZED THAT I HAD BEEN MADE INTO AN EXAMPLE.
"HE PUT HIS MARK ON ME, AND THEN HE CAST ME OUT. HE SENT ME HERE."
"SURELY HE EXPECTED ME TO FIGHT MY WAY BACK INTO HELL TO DEMAND RETRIBUTION, AND I CONSIDERED THAT PATH FOR MANY DAYS AFTER MY ARRIVAL HERE...
"...BUT THEN I FOUND THE GRIMOIRE, ABANDONED BY AN ANCIENT WITCH OF EARTH AND HIDDEN FROM MORTAL SIGHT FOR CENTURIES. IT WAS WAITING FOR ME."
'THE WARRIOR FOUND THE BOOK, AND FROM THE BOOK HE LEARNED THE WORD; THEIR NUMBER WAS LEGION WHO GATHERED TO HEAR THE WARRIOR SPEAK THE WORD, AND THEIR LOYALTY MADE HIM FIRST A PRIEST, AND THEN A KING.'
WHEN I OPEN THE GREAT PASSAGE, AND FACE MY FORMER MASTER...

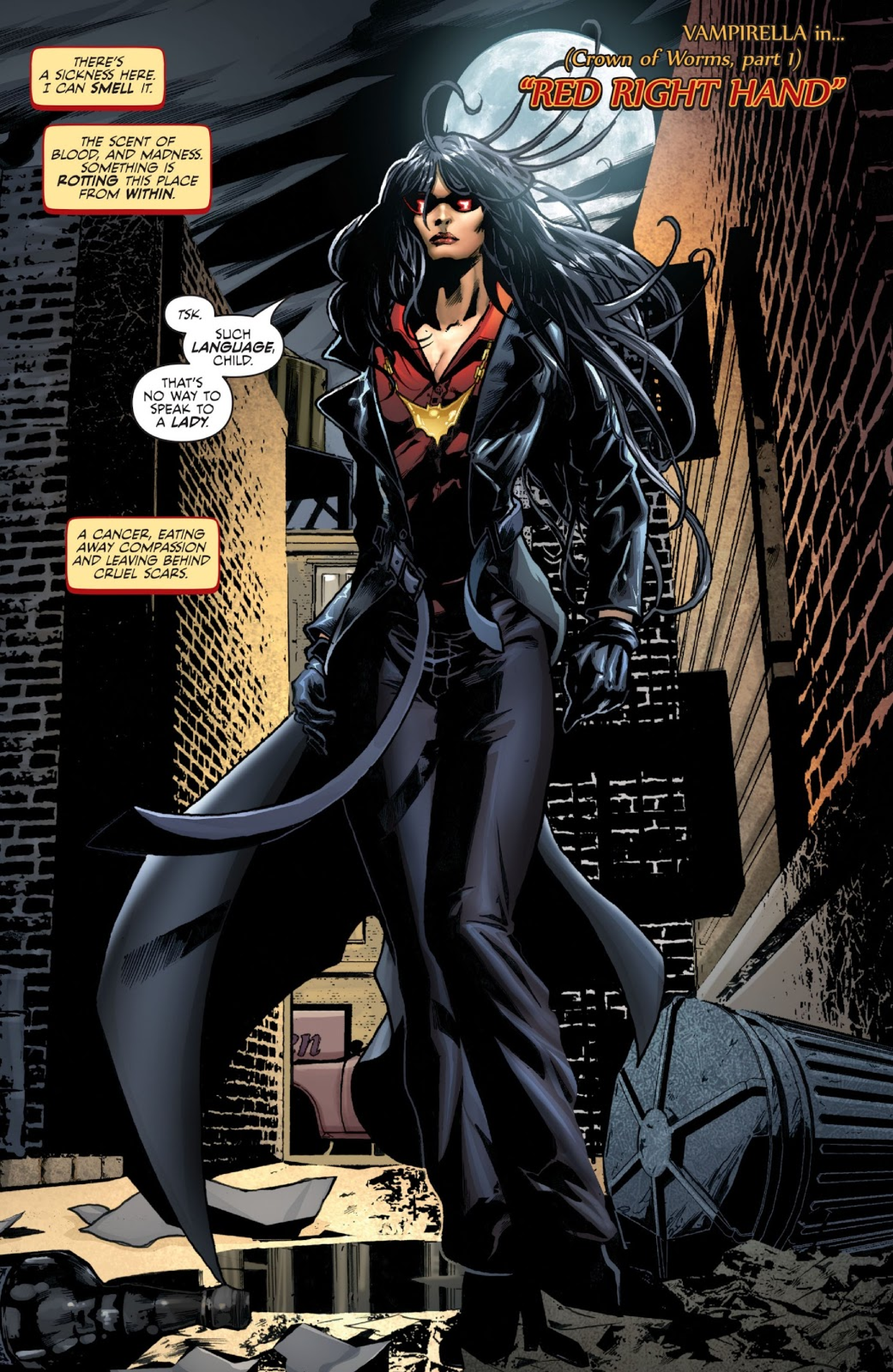

...I WILL FACE HIM AS A KING, POISED TO CONQUER HELL. I HAVE A LEGION OF ACOLYTES BEHIND ME...
...AND SOON I WILL HAVE YOU, THE SHADOW QUEEN OF THE EARTHLY REALM, AS MY BRIDE.
AS
YOUR
WHAT?!
YOU'RE INSANE!
WHAK
YOU DARE--?!
I HAVE DREAMED A KINGDOM FOR YOU, CAN'T YOU SEE THAT? EVERYTHING YOU C-COULD POSSIBLY DESSSIIIRE, RIGHT
HEEERRRRR UUAAAAGGGH..
OH.
SKRRIIYYEEEEEEEEE!

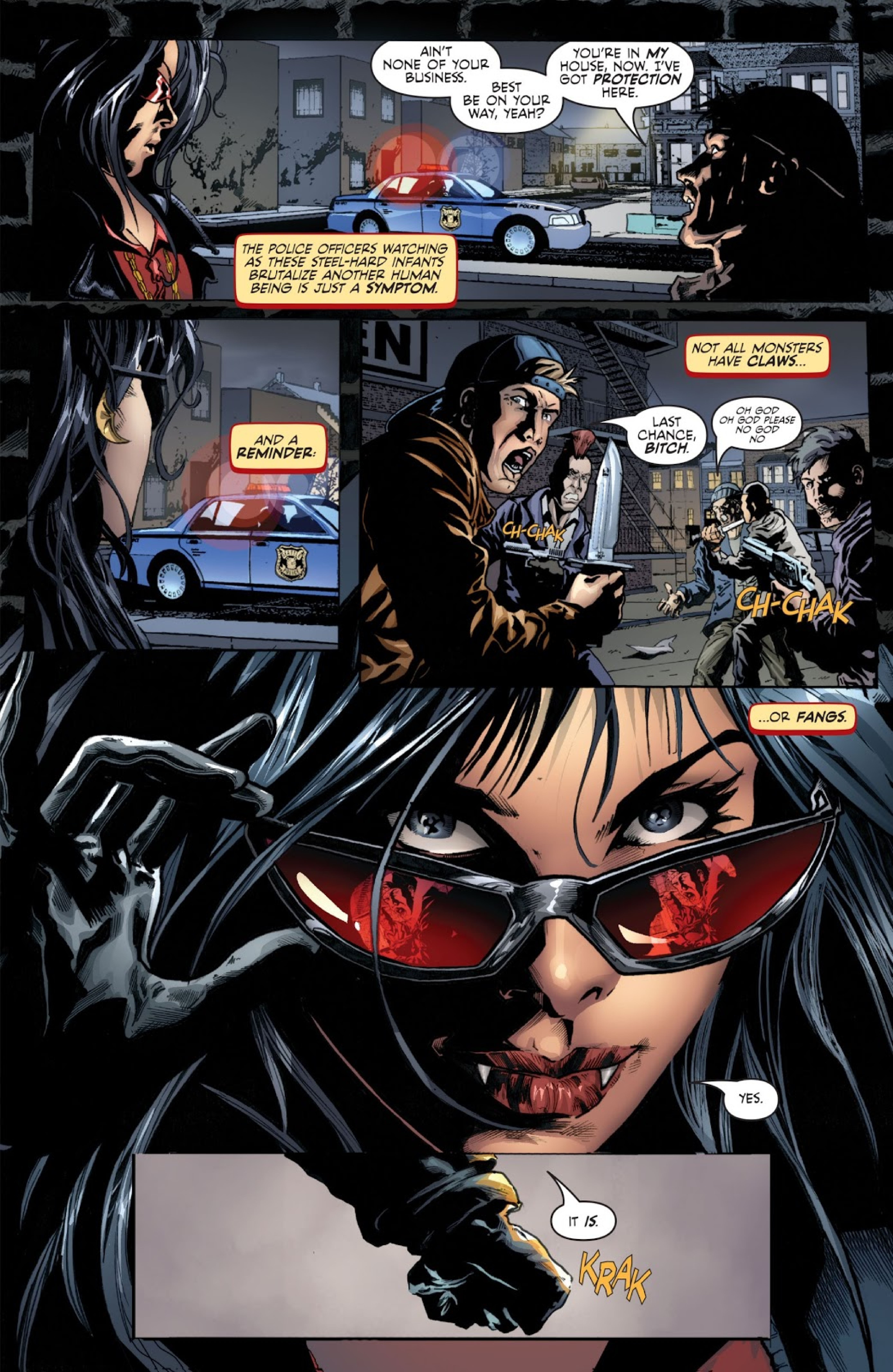

YANK
SKREEK!
I WILL BIND YOU TO THE LEY LINES AND YOU'LL STAY HERE FOREVER!
WE SHALL BE JOINED, WOMAN!
RRREEYYEEK
FWOOSH
JOIN THIS.
YOU HAVE TO GET THOSE PEOPLE OUT OF HERE. CONVINCE THEM SOMEHOW. THEY WORSHIP YOU; WORK WITH THAT.
GET THE INNOCENTS AS FAR AWAY AS YOU CAN, THEN DEAL WITH THE MONSTROSITY UPSTAIRS.
ACOLYTES! LOOK TO ME AND HEED THE WORD!
YOU MUST LEAVE THE KEEP NOW! GO TO THE CATHEDRAL AND WAIT FOR ME THERE!

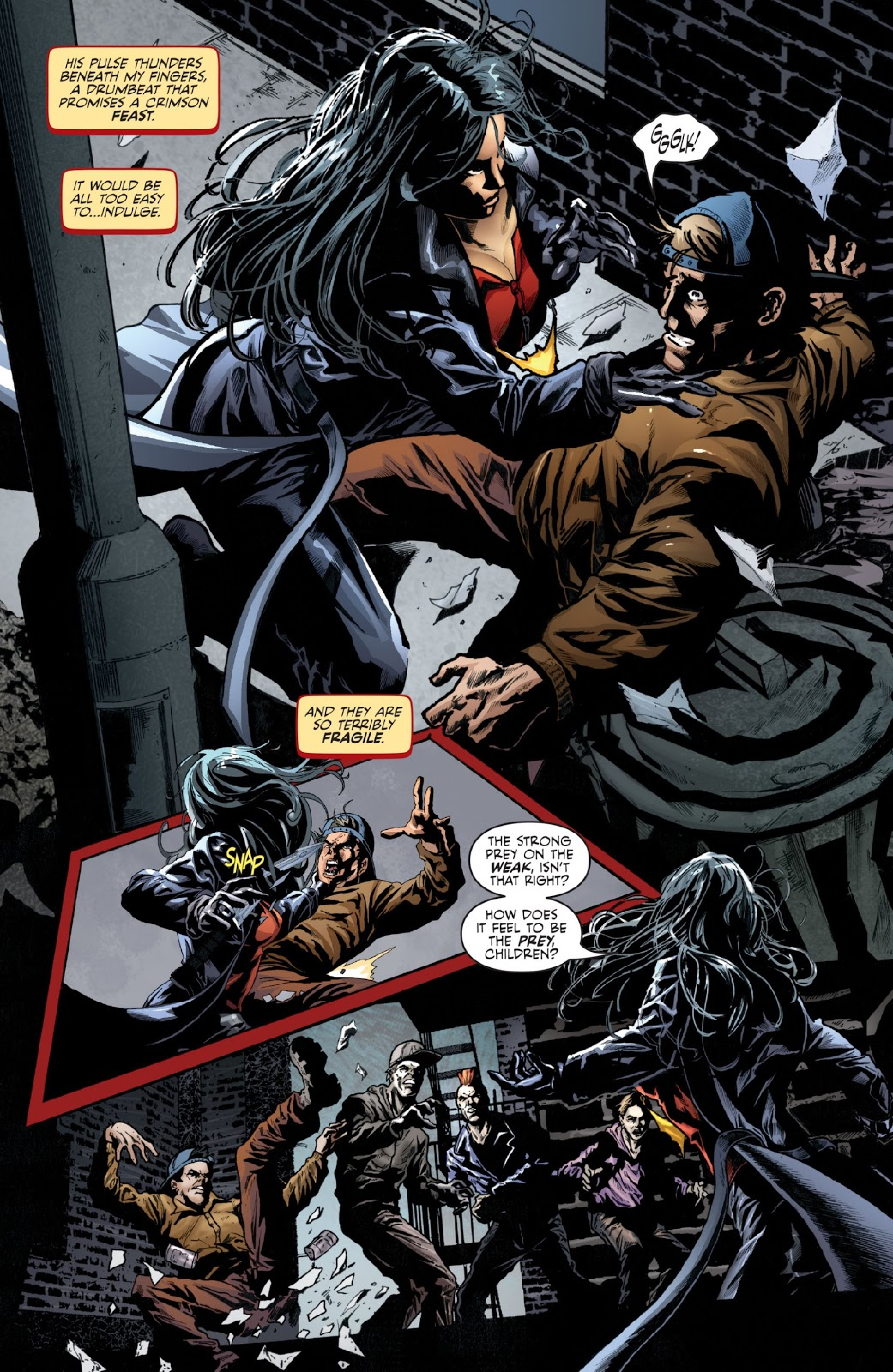

SKRRIIEEEEK!
SHE TAINTS THE WORD WITH LIES!
FALSE PROPHET!
HERETIC!
BETRAYER!
DESMODUS IS THE LIAR. HE'S GOING TO SEND YOU INTO A WAR THAT YOU'RE NOT READY TO FIGHT...
SKRAAASH
...AND I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT A WAY TO STAY ALIVE WITHOUT FIGHTING YOU... AND KILLING YOU.
I'D BACK AWAY IF I WERE YOU.
FOOM

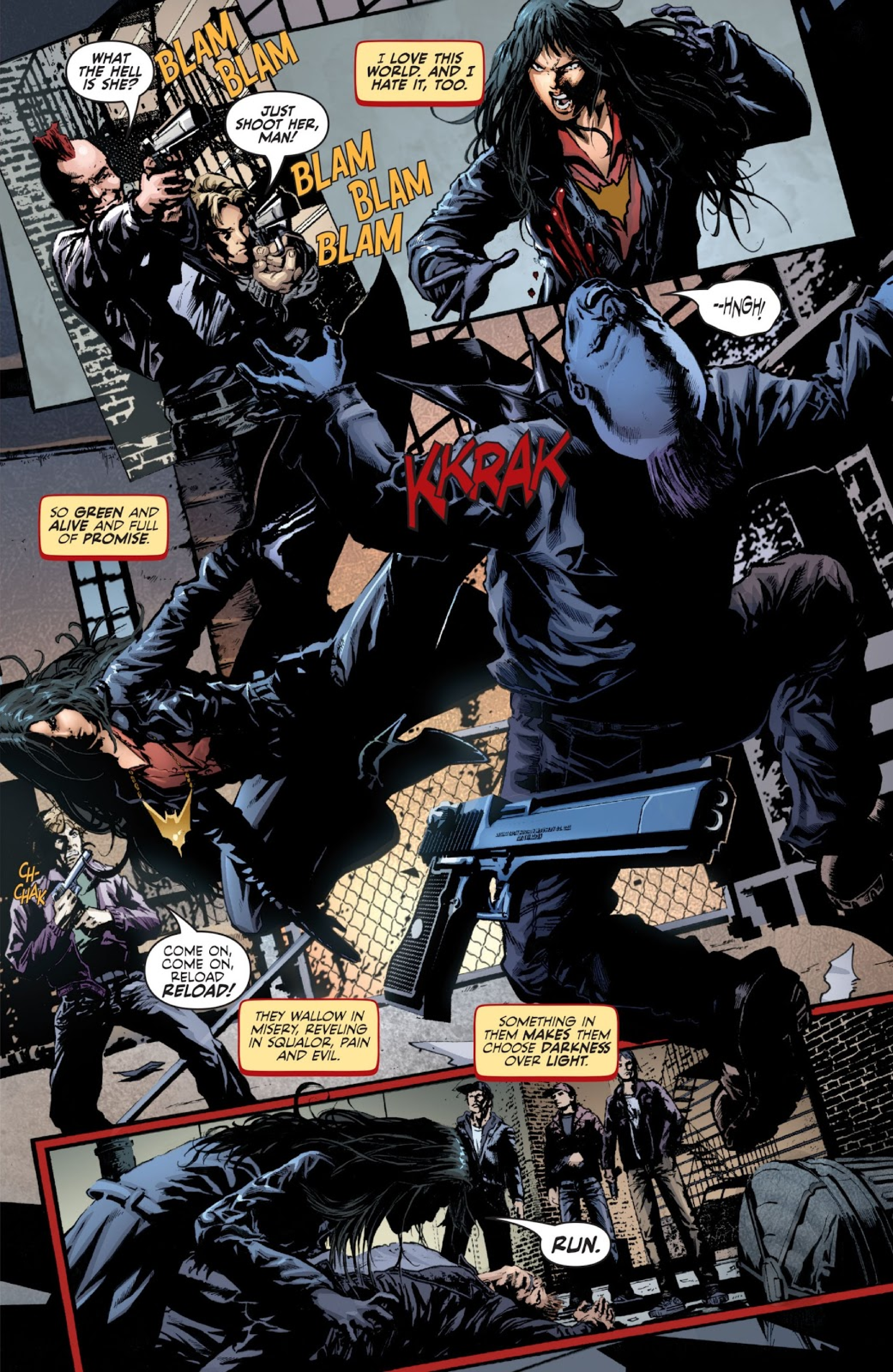

FOOM
I... TRIED. THAT'S WHAT MATTERS.

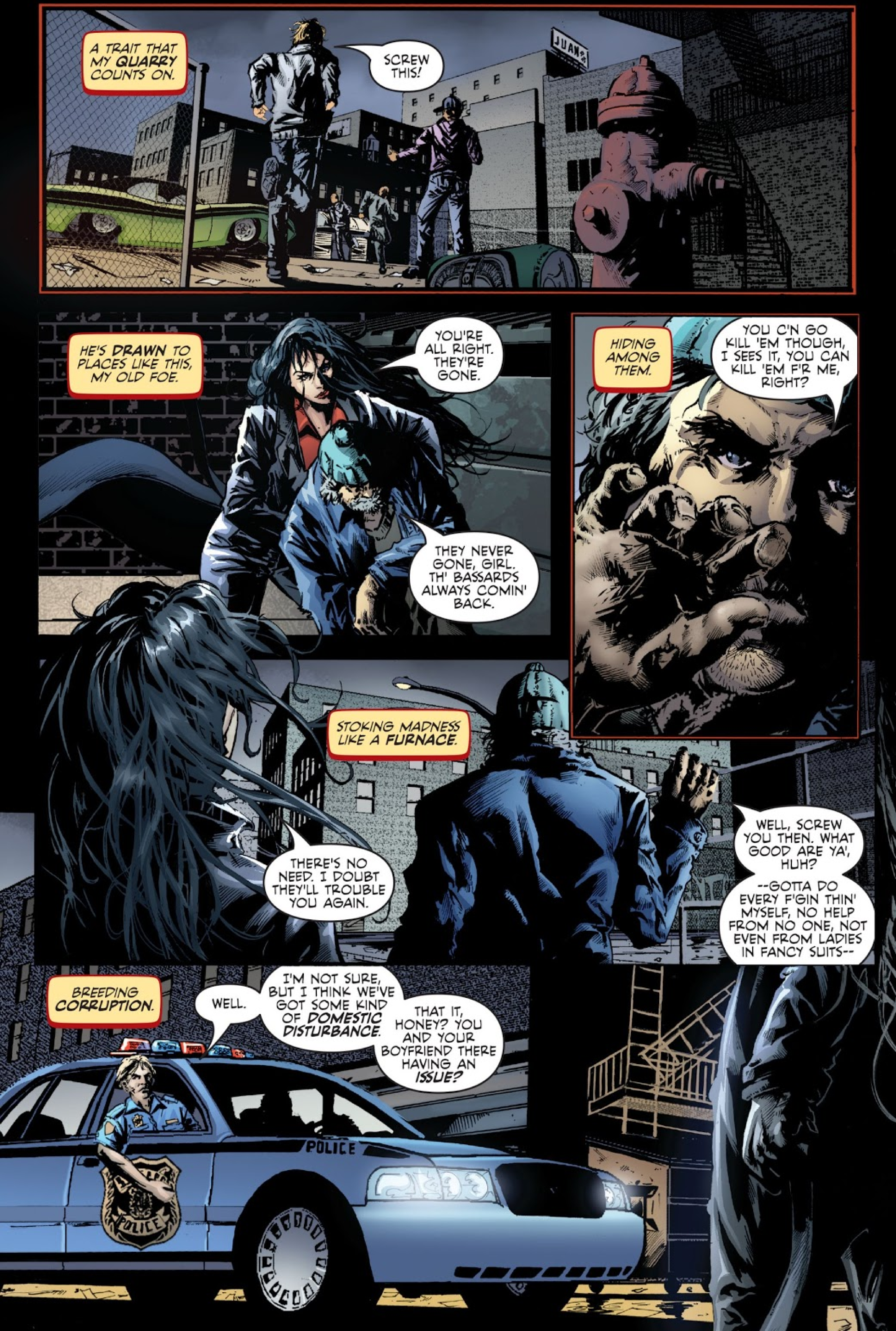

SEATTLE, WA. MIDNIGHT.
--SAID YOU COULD SLEEP HERE, FOOL?
--HIT HIM *AGAIN*--
--GONNA HAVE TO TAKE YOUR *EYE*, DUDE--
--PLEASE, *I'M SORRY*, I'LL GO--
--DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING, I'LL JUST LEAVE--
NOT SO FAST.
YOU BEEN SLEEPING HERE ***THREE NIGHTS***. THAT'S ***BACK RENT*** YOU OWE, MAN...
YEAH. WANT ME AN *EYE*.
...AND I GOT ME A FEELING YOU CAN'T PAY THE ***FREIGHT***.
MAKES ME LOOK ***BAD*** IN FRONT OF MY BOYS, Y'KNOW. ***NOT COOL***.
WHUDD
NNNGH!
HE'S NOT THE ONE MAKING YOU LOOK BAD.
WHO THE F--

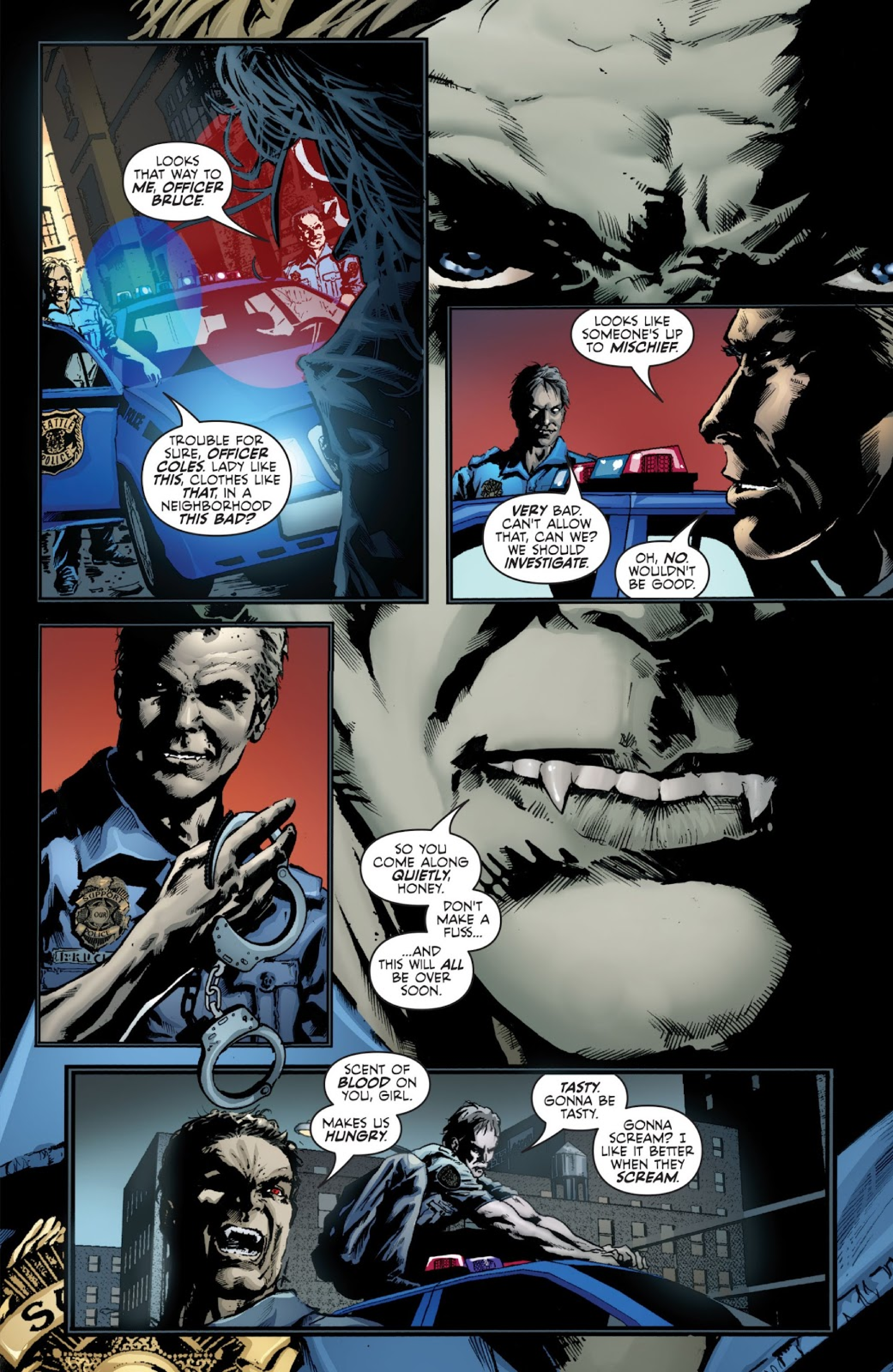

VAMPIRELLA in...
(Crown of Worms, part 1)
"RED RIGHT HAND"
THERE'S A SICKNESS HERE. I CAN SMELL IT.
THE SCENT OF BLOOD, AND MADNESS. SOMETHING IS ROTTING THIS PLACE FROM WITHIN.
TSK. SUCH LANGUAGE, CHILD. THAT'S NO WAY TO SPEAK TO A LADY.
A CANCER, EATING AWAY COMPASSION AND LEAVING BEHIND CRUEL SCARS.

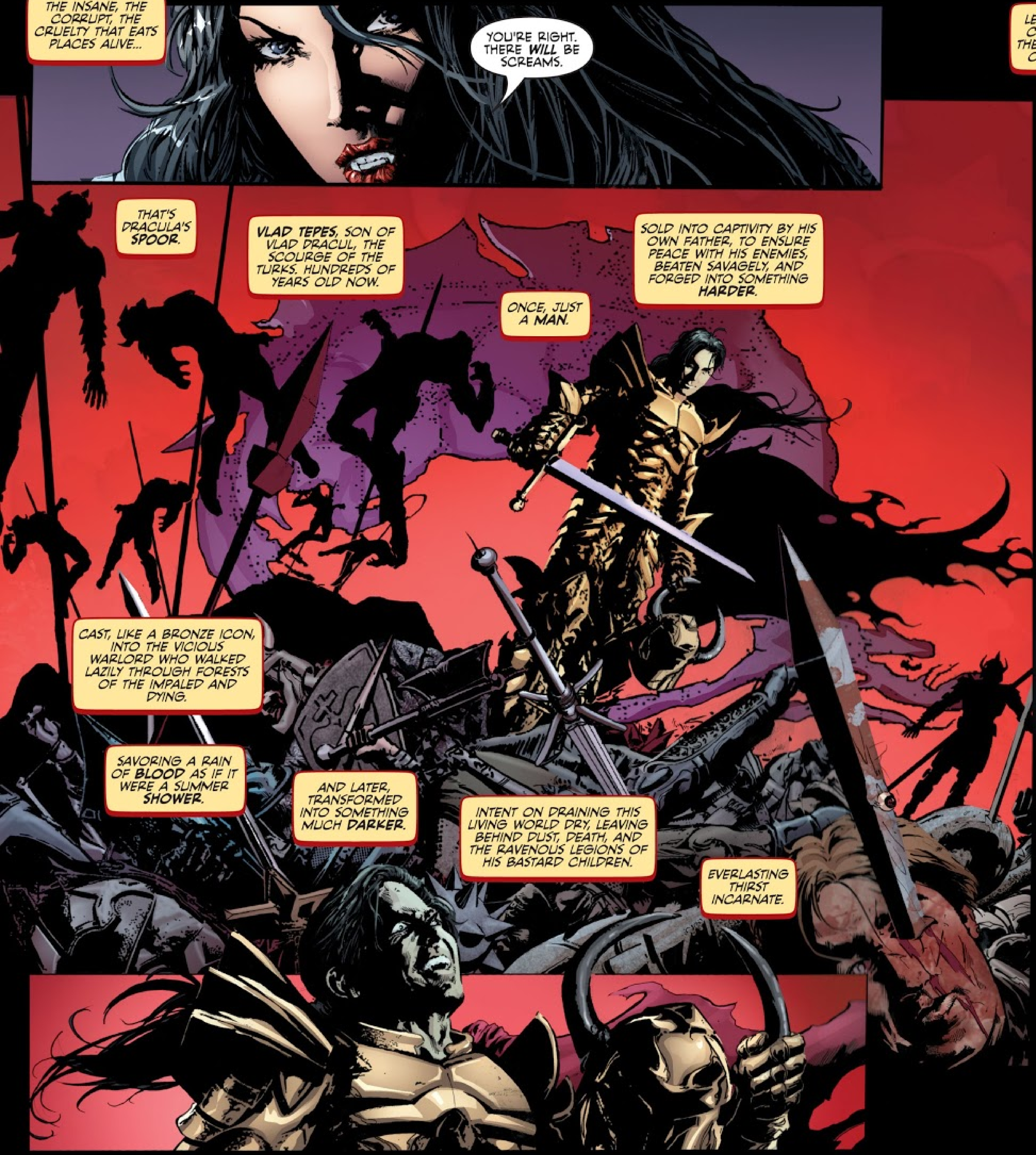

AIN'T NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
BEST BE ON YOUR WAY, YEAH?
YOU'RE IN MY HOUSE, NOW. I'VE GOT PROTECTION HERE.
THE POLICE OFFICERS WATCHING AS THESE STEEL-HARD INFANTS BRUTALIZE ANOTHER HUMAN BEING IS JUST A SYMPTOM.
AND A REMINDER:
NOT ALL MONSTERS HAVE CLAWS...
LAST CHANCE, BITCH.
OH GOD OH GOD PLEASE NO GOD NO
CH-CHAK
CH-CHAK
...OR FANGS.
YES.
IT IS.
KRAK

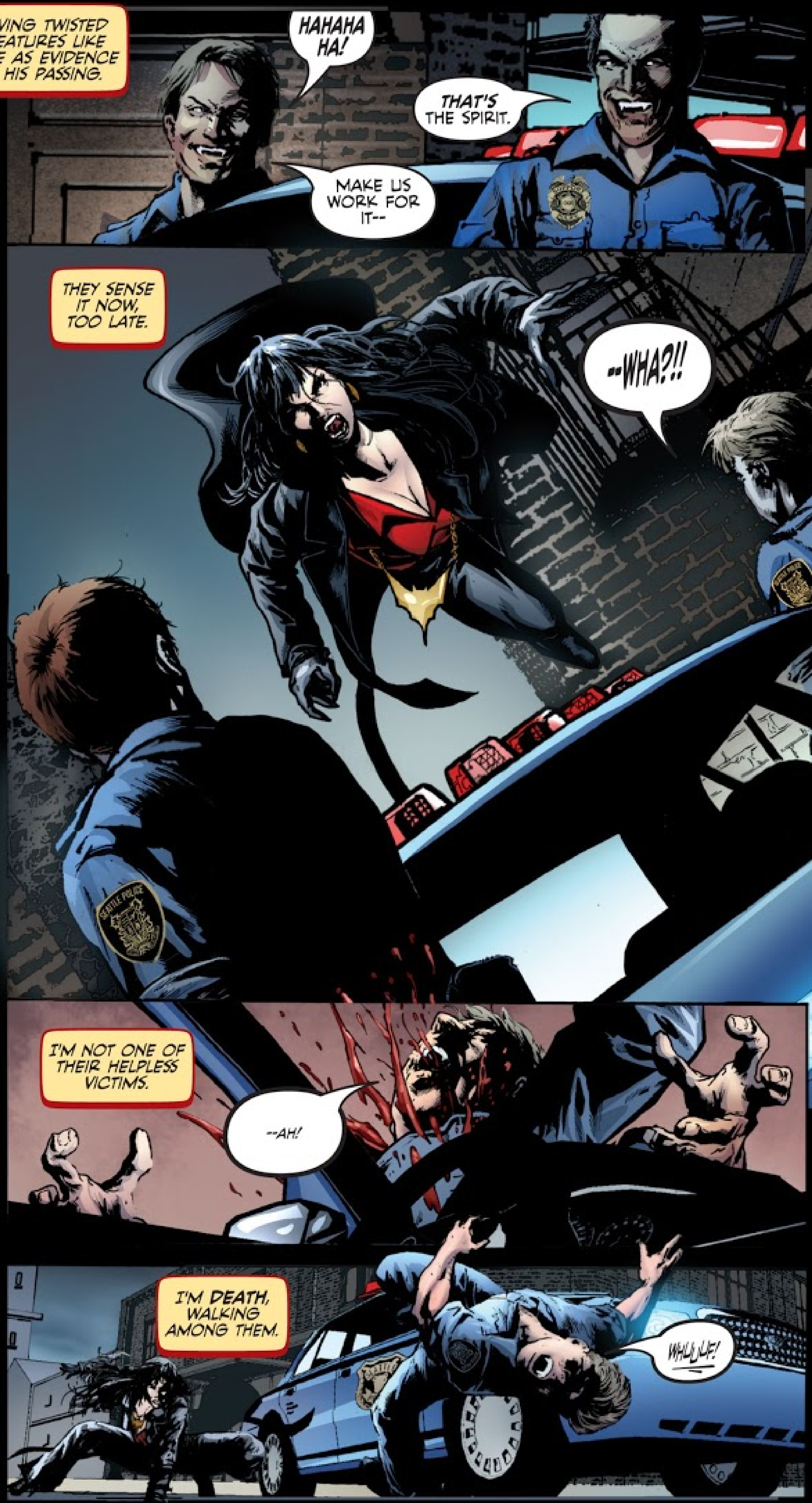

HIS PULSE THUNDERS BENEATH MY FINGERS, A DRUMBEAT THAT PROMISES A CRIMSON FEAST.
IT WOULD BE ALL TOO EASY TO...INDULGE.
GGGLK!
AND THEY ARE SO TERRIBLY FRAGILE.
SNAP
THE STRONG PREY ON THE WEAK, ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE THE PREY, CHILDREN?

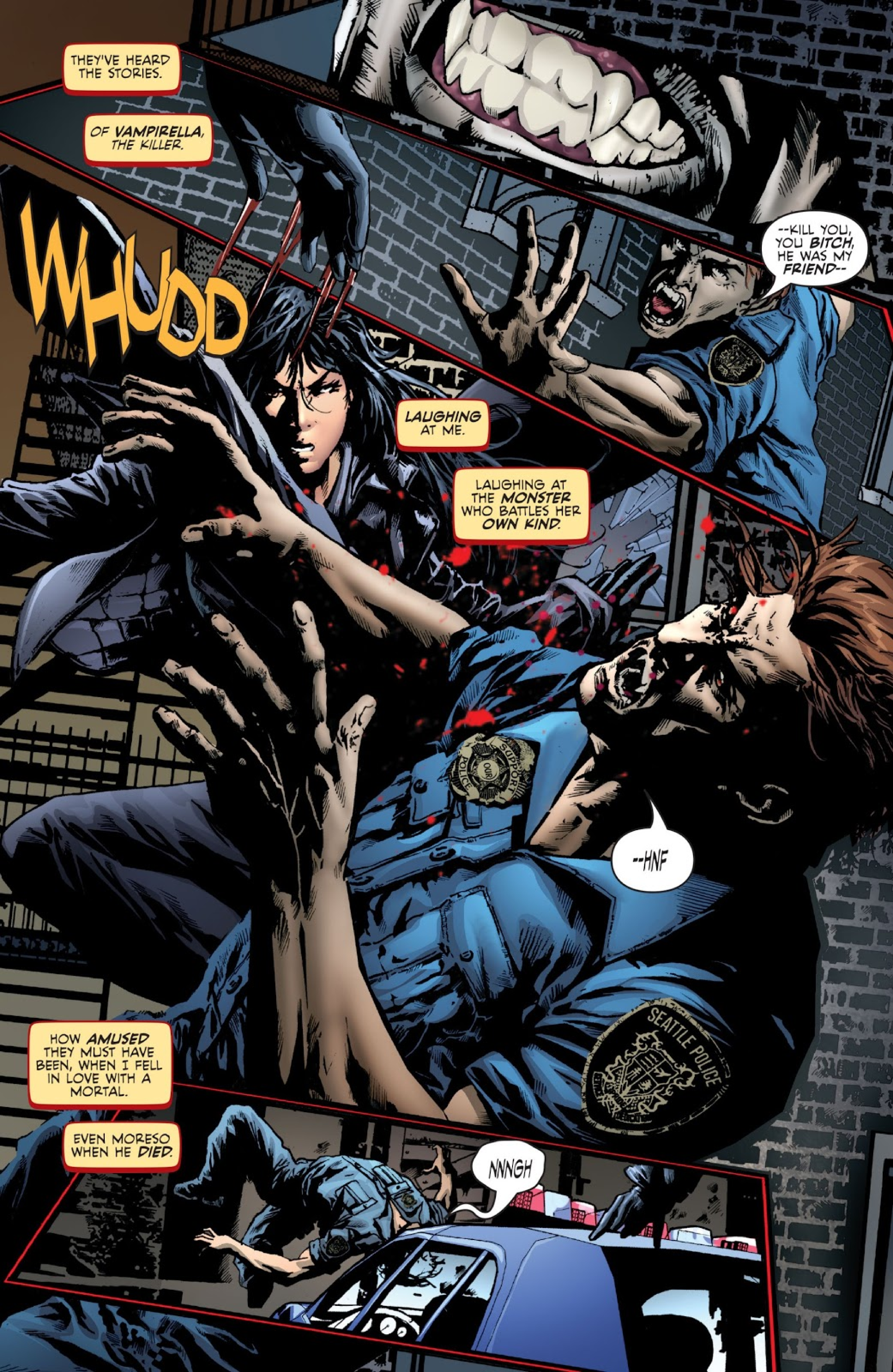

WHAT THE HELL IS SHE?
BLAM BLAM
JUST SHOOT HER, MAN!
BLAM BLAM BLAM
I LOVE THIS WORLD. AND I HATE IT, TOO.
--HNGH!
KKRAK
SO GREEN AND ALIVE AND FULL OF PROMISE.
CH-CHAK
COME ON, COME ON, RELOAD RELOAD!
THEY WALLOW IN MISERY, REVELING IN SQUALOR, PAIN AND EVIL.
SOMETHING IN THEM MAKES THEM CHOOSE DARKNESS OVER LIGHT.
RUN.

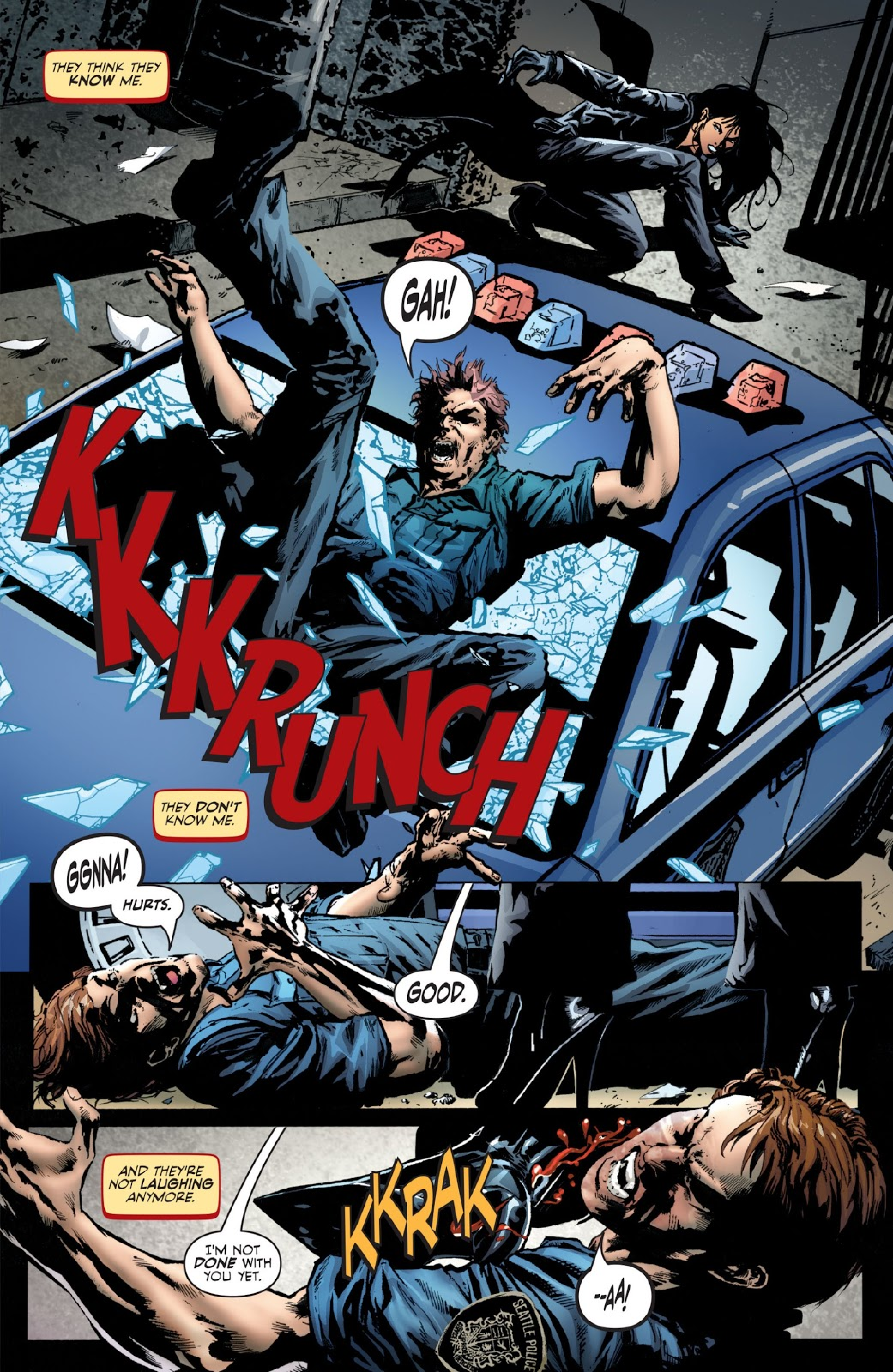

A TRAIT THAT MY QUARRY COUNTS ON.
SCREW THIS!
JUAN
HE'S DRAWN TO PLACES LIKE THIS, MY OLD FOE.
YOU'RE ALL RIGHT. THEY'RE GONE.
THEY NEVER GONE, GIRL. TH' BASSARDS ALWAYS COMIN' BACK.
HIDING AMONG THEM.
YOU C'N GO KILL 'EM THOUGH, I SEES IT, YOU CAN KILL 'EM F'R ME, RIGHT?
STOKING MADNESS LIKE A FURNACE.
THERE'S NO NEED. I DOUBT THEY'LL TROUBLE YOU AGAIN.
WELL, SCREW YOU THEN. WHAT GOOD ARE YA', HUH?
--GOTTA DO EVERY F'GIN THIN' MYSELF, NO HELP FROM NO ONE, NOT EVEN FROM LADIES IN FANCY SUITS--
BREEDING CORRUPTION.
WELL.
I'M NOT SURE, BUT I THINK WE'VE GOT SOME KIND OF DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE.
THAT IT, HONEY? YOU AND YOUR BOYFRIEND THERE HAVING AN ISSUE?
POLICE
POLICE

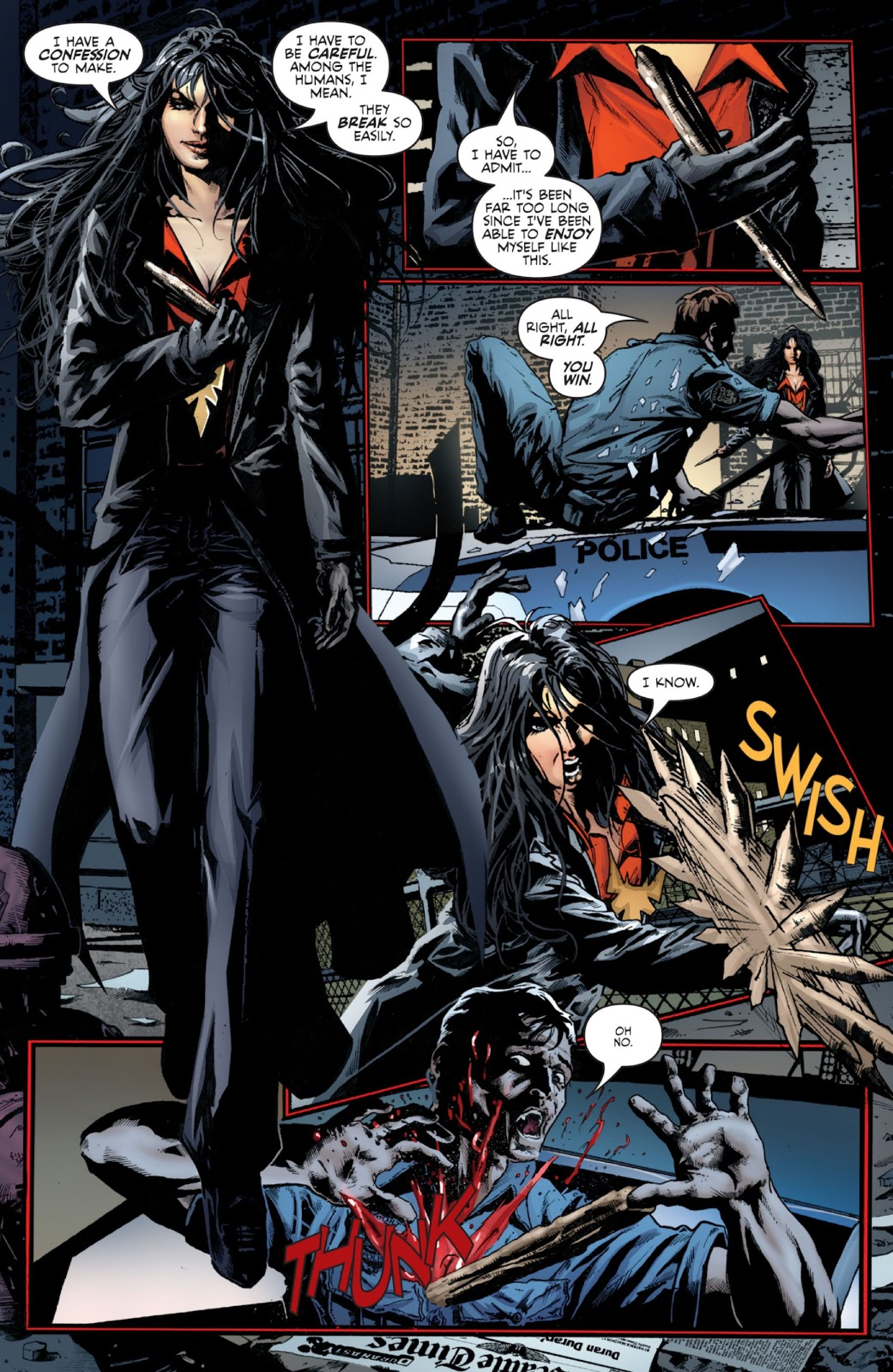

LOOKS THAT WAY TO *ME, OFFICER BRUCE*.
TROUBLE FOR SURE, *OFFICER COLES*. LADY LIKE *THIS*, CLOTHES LIKE *THAT*, IN A NEIGHBORHOOD *THIS BAD?*
LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE'S UP TO *MISCHIEF*.
VERY BAD. CAN'T ALLOW THAT, CAN WE? WE SHOULD *INVESTIGATE*.
OH, *NO*. WOULDN'T BE GOOD.
SUPPORT OUR POLICE
SO YOU COME ALONG *QUIETLY*, HONEY.
DON'T MAKE A FUSS...
...AND THIS WILL *ALL* BE OVER SOON.
SCENT OF *BLOOD* ON YOU, GIRL.
MAKES US *HUNGRY*.
TASTY. GONNA BE TASTY.
GONNA SCREAM? I LIKE IT BETTER WHEN THEY *SCREAM*.

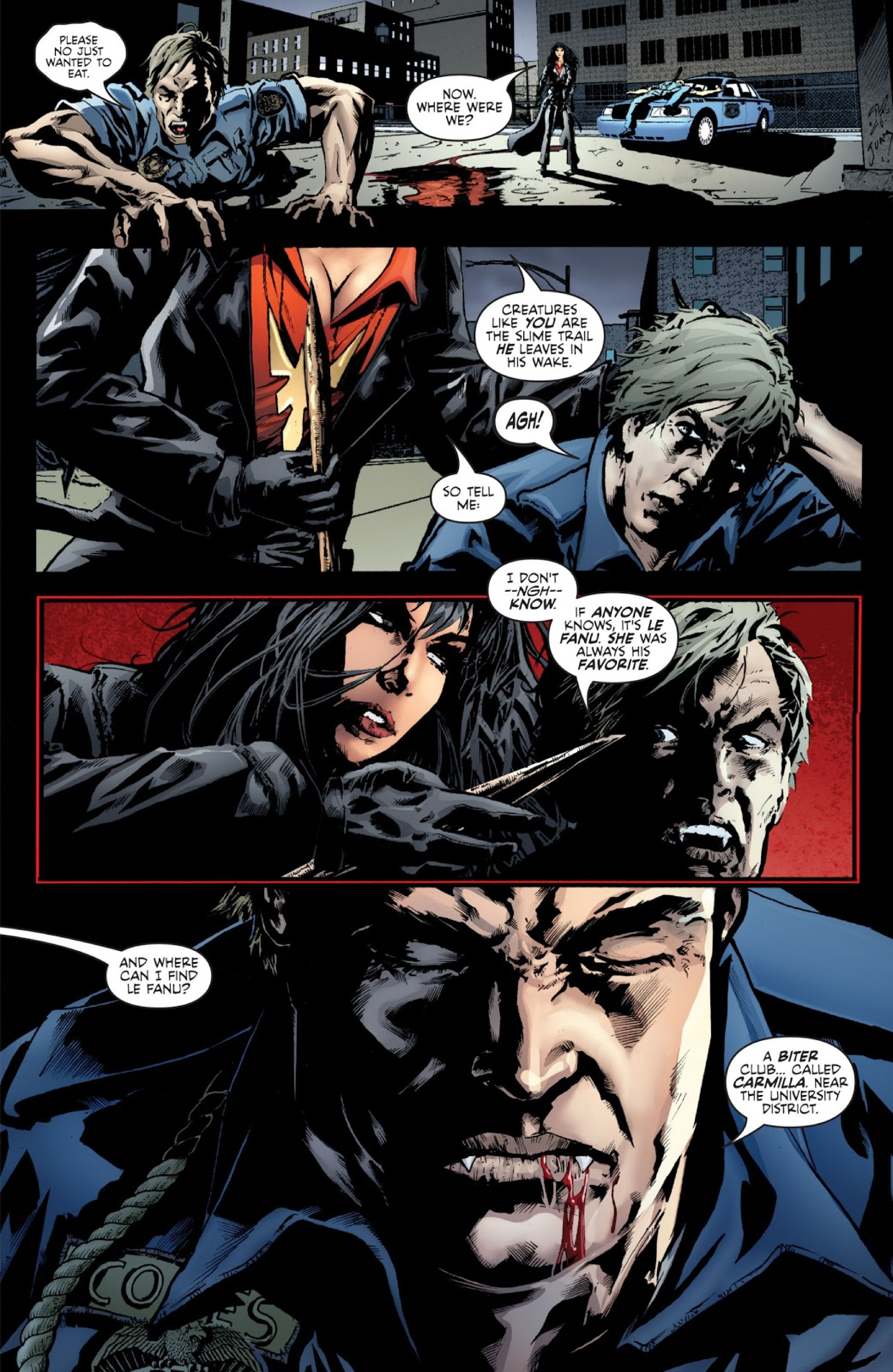

THE INSANE, THE CORRUPT, THE CRUELTY THAT EATS PLACES ALIVE...
YOU'RE RIGHT. THERE **WILL** BE SCREAMS.
THAT'S DRACULA'S **SPOOR**.
VLAD TEPES, SON OF VLAD DRACUL, THE SCOURGE OF THE TURKS. HUNDREDS OF YEARS OLD NOW.
ONCE, JUST A **MAN**.
SOLD INTO CAPTIVITY BY HIS OWN FATHER, TO ENSURE PEACE WITH HIS ENEMIES, BEATEN SAVAGELY, AND FORGED INTO SOMETHING **HARDER**.
CAST, LIKE A BRONZE ICON, INTO THE VICIOUS WARLORD WHO WALKED LAZILY THROUGH FORESTS OF THE IMPALED AND DYING.
SAVORING A RAIN OF **BLOOD** AS IF IT WERE A SUMMER **SHOWER**.
AND LATER, TRANSFORMED INTO SOMETHING MUCH **DARKER**.
INTENT ON DRAINING THIS LIVING WORLD DRY, LEAVING BEHIND DUST, DEATH, AND THE RAVENOUS LEGIONS OF HIS BASTARD CHILDREN.
EVERLASTING THIRST INCARNATE.

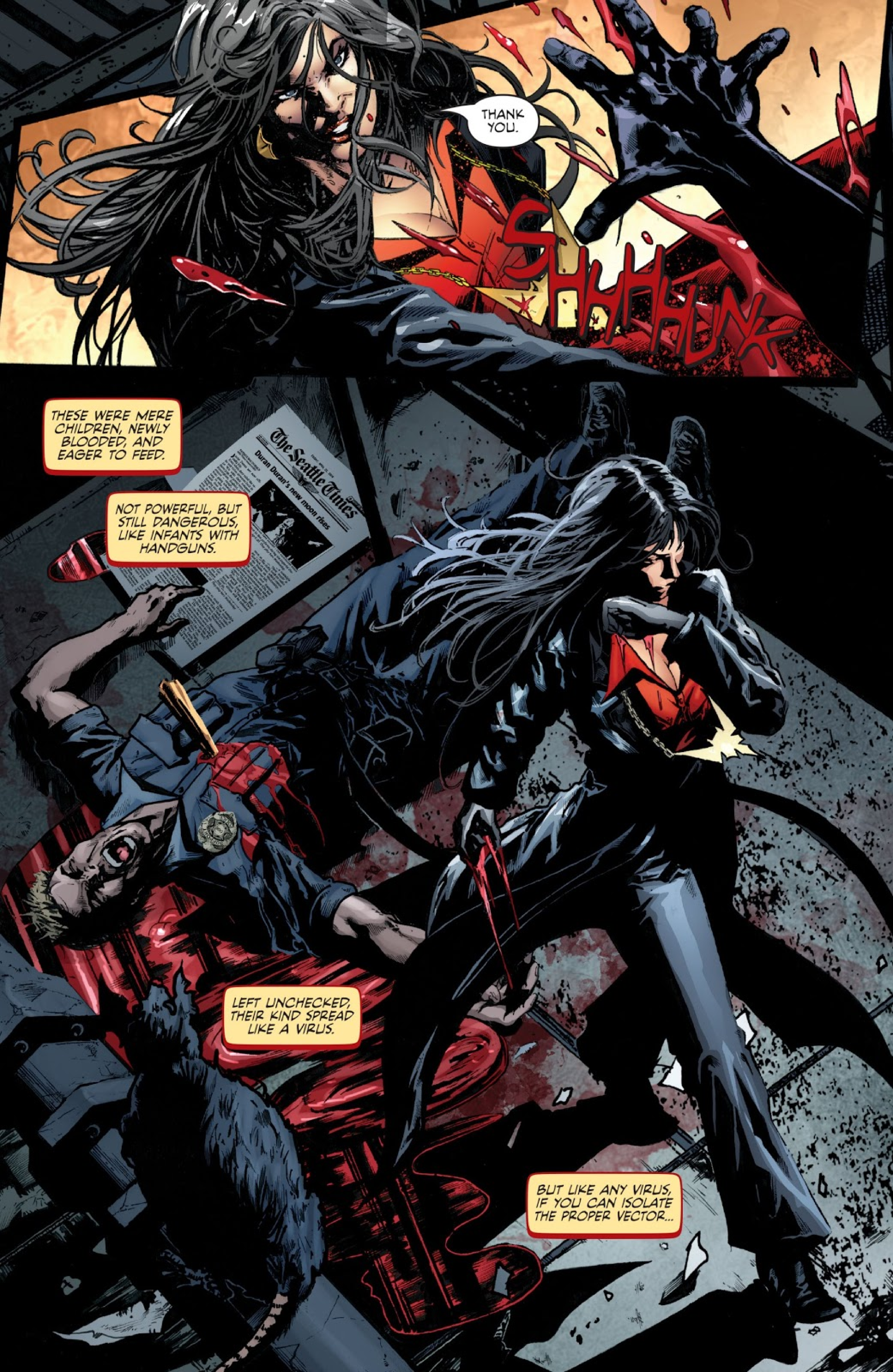

LEAVING TWISTED CREATURES LIKE THESE AS EVIDENCE OF HIS PASSING.
HAHAHA HA!
MAKE US WORK FOR IT--
THAT'S THE SPIRIT.
THEY SENSE IT NOW, TOO LATE.
--WHA?!!
SEATTLE POLICE
I'M NOT ONE OF THEIR HELPLESS VICTIMS.
--AH!
I'M **DEATH**, WALKING AMONG THEM.
WHUUUF!

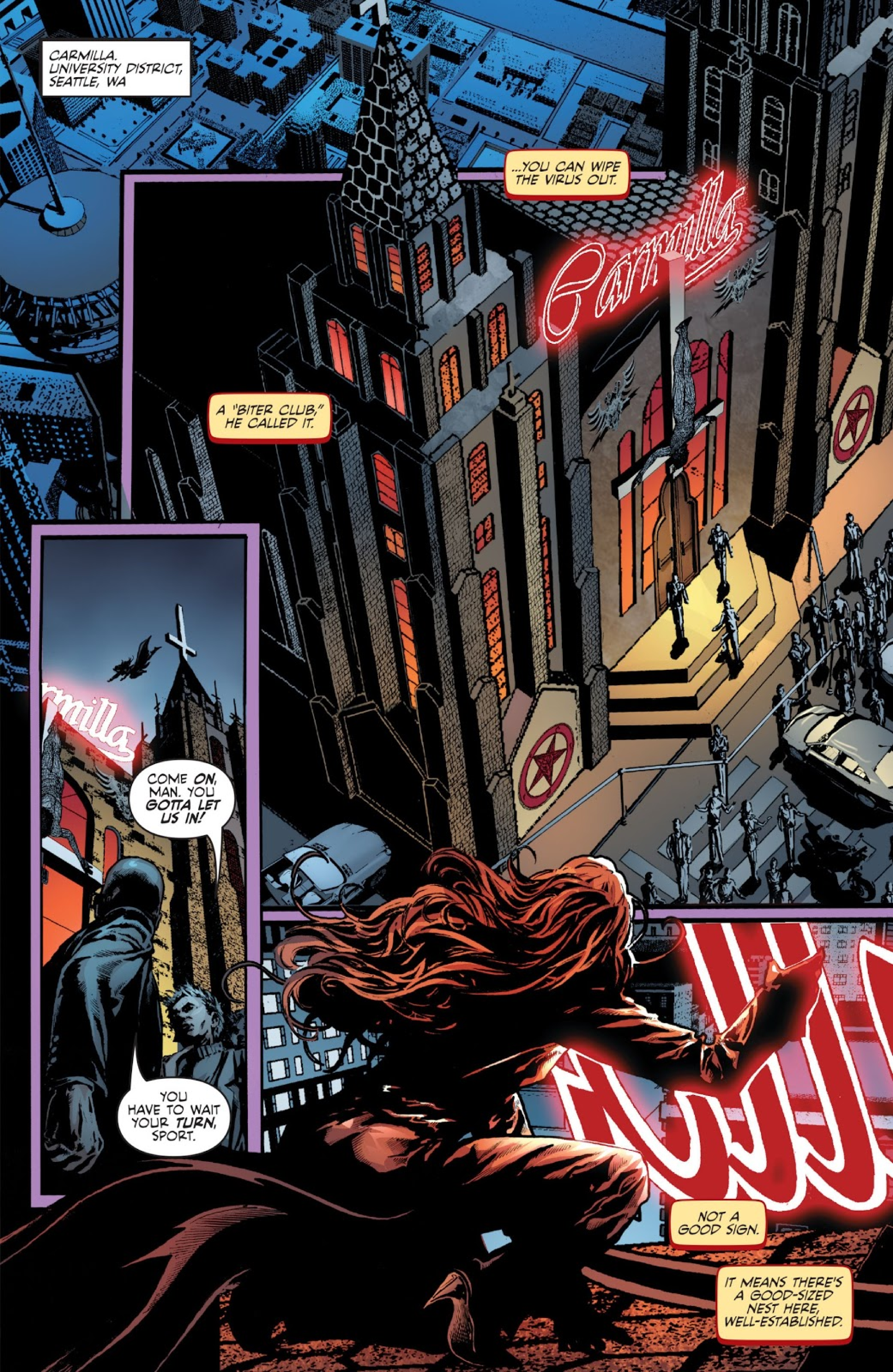

THEY'VE HEARD THE STORIES.
OF *VAMPIRELLA*, THE KILLER.
WHUDD
--KILL YOU, YOU *BITCH*, HE WAS MY *FRIEND*--
LAUGHING AT ME.
LAUGHING AT THE *MONSTER* WHO BATTLES HER *OWN KIND*.
SUPPORT OUR POLICE
--HNF
SEATTLE POLICE
HOW *AMUSED* THEY MUST HAVE BEEN, WHEN I FELL IN LOVE WITH A MORTAL.
EVEN MORESO WHEN HE *DIED*.
NNNGH

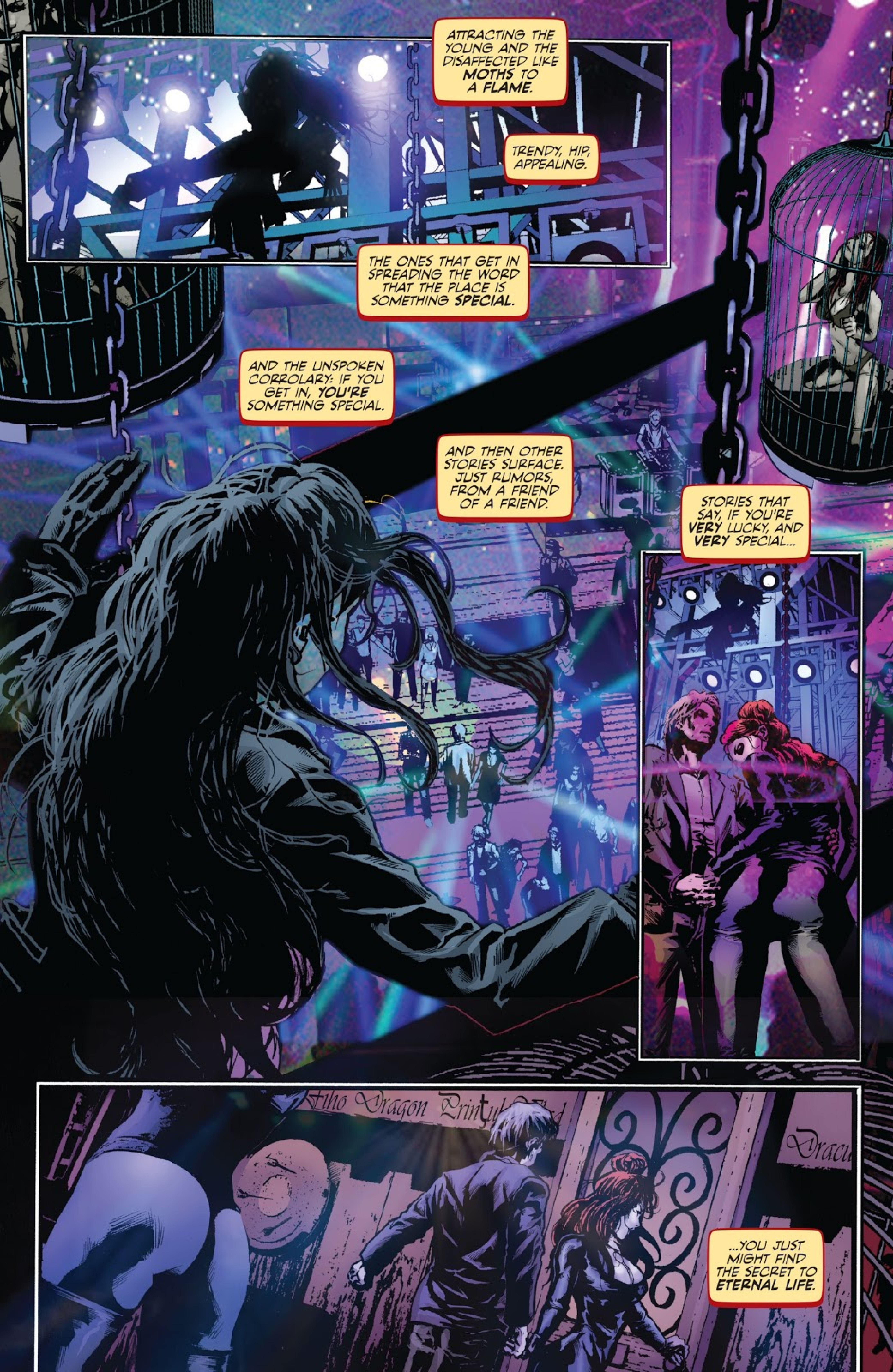

THEY THINK THEY KNOW ME.
GAH!
KKKRUNCH
THEY DON'T KNOW ME.
GGNNA!
HURTS.
GOOD.
AND THEY'RE NOT LAUGHING ANYMORE.
KKRAK
I'M NOT DONE WITH YOU YET.
--AA!
SEATTLE POLICE

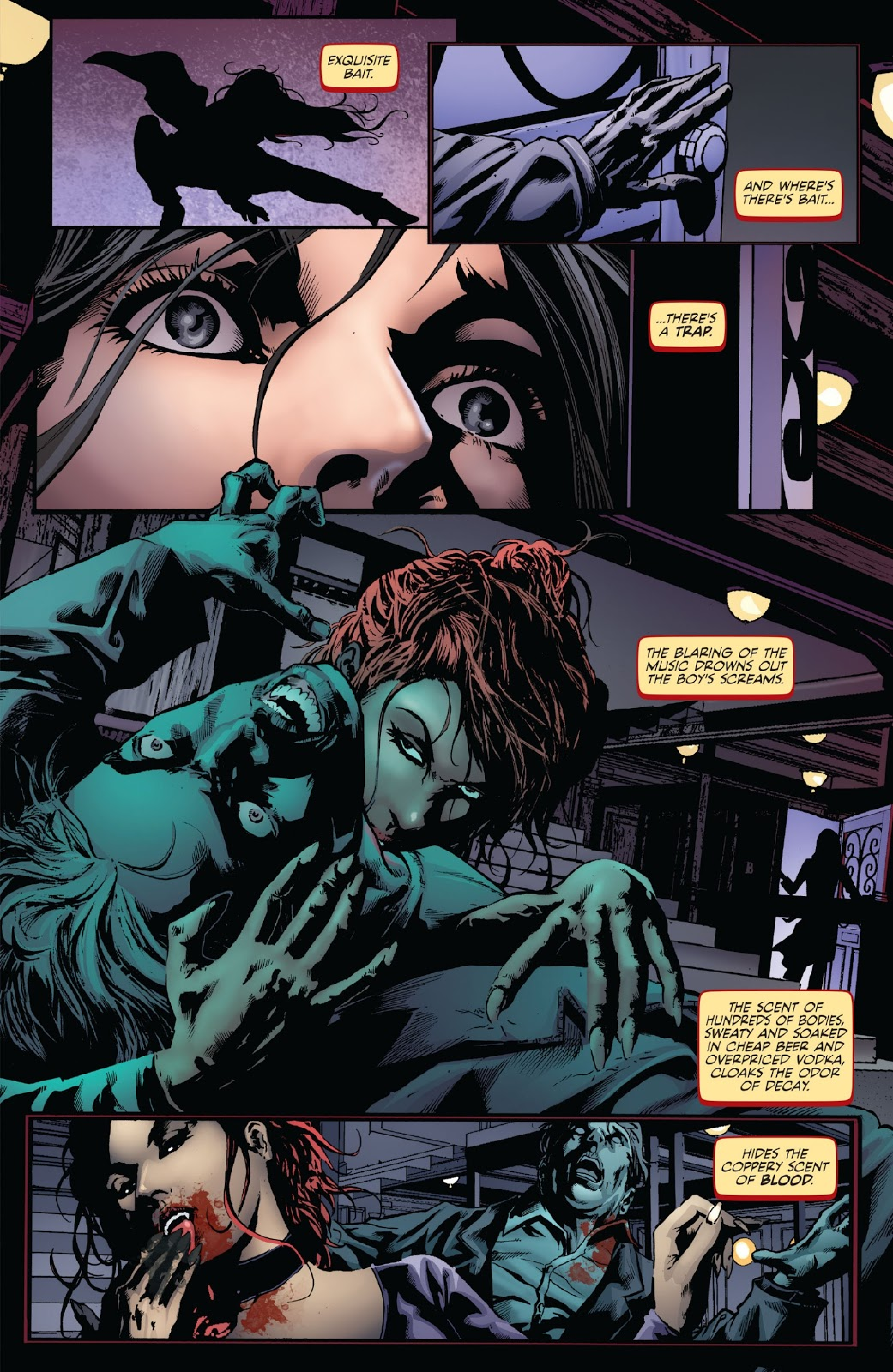

I HAVE A *CONFESSION* TO MAKE.
I HAVE TO BE *CAREFUL*. AMONG THE HUMANS, I MEAN.
THEY *BREAK* SO EASILY.
SO, I HAVE TO ADMIT...
...IT'S BEEN FAR TOO LONG SINCE I'VE BEEN ABLE TO *ENJOY* MYSELF LIKE THIS.
ALL RIGHT, *ALL RIGHT*.
YOU WIN.
POLICE
I KNOW.
SWISH
OH NO.
THUNK

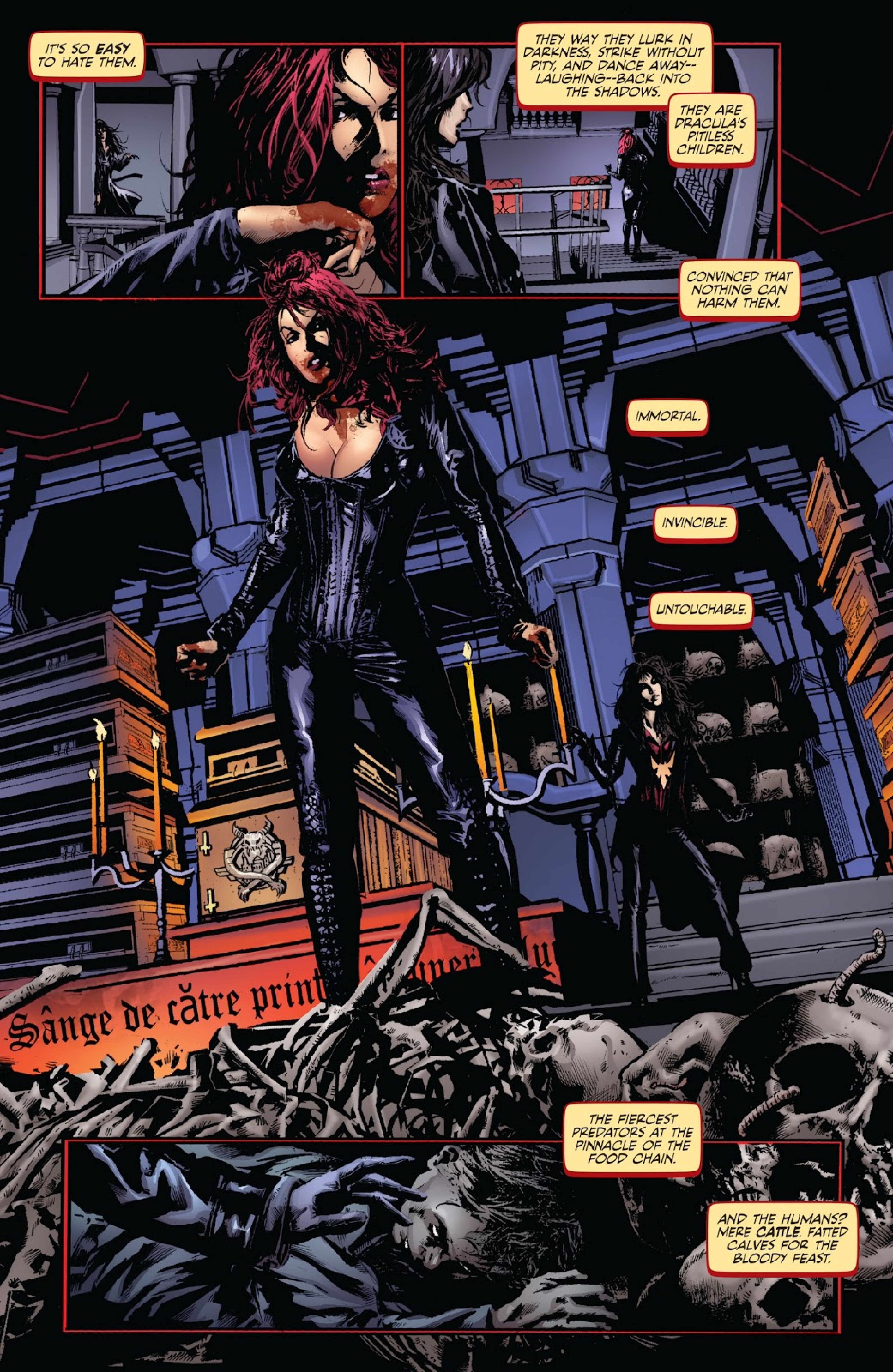

PLEASE NO JUST WANTED TO EAT.
NOW. WHERE WERE WE?
CREATURES LIKE *YOU* ARE THE SLIME TRAIL *HE* LEAVES IN HIS WAKE.
AGH!
SO TELL ME:
I DON'T --*NGH*-- *KNOW*.
IF *ANYONE* KNOWS, IT'S *LE FANU*. *SHE* WAS ALWAYS HIS *FAVORITE*.
AND WHERE CAN I FIND LE FANU?
A *BITER* CLUB... CALLED *CARMILLA*. NEAR THE UNIVERSITY DISTRICT.

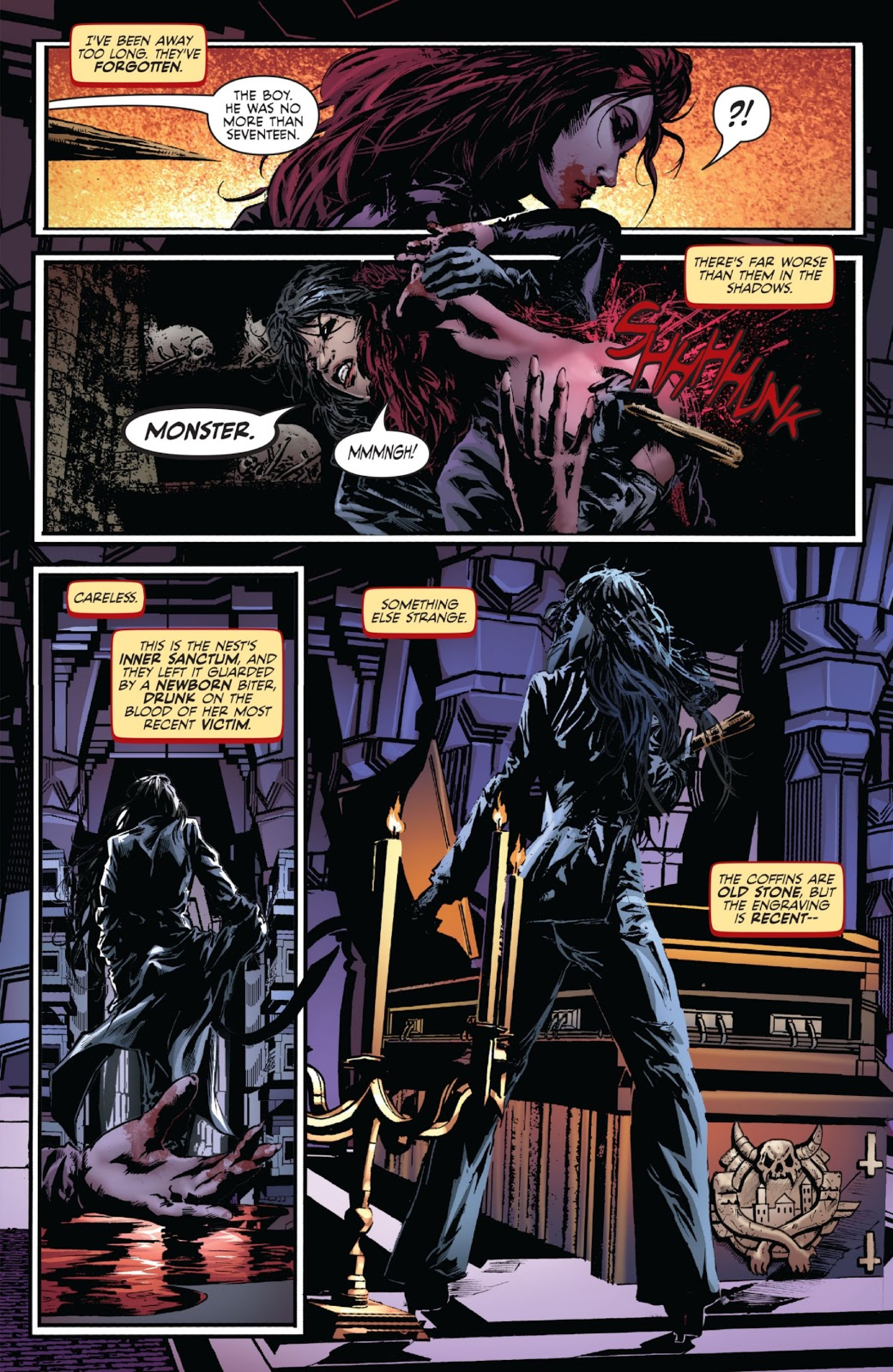

THANK YOU.
SHHHHUNK
THESE WERE MERE CHILDREN, NEWLY BLOODED, AND EAGER TO FEED.
The Seattle Times
Duran Duran's new moon rises
NOT POWERFUL, BUT STILL DANGEROUS, LIKE INFANTS WITH HANDGUNS.
LEFT UNCHECKED, THEIR KIND SPREAD LIKE A VIRUS.
BUT LIKE ANY VIRUS, IF YOU CAN ISOLATE THE PROPER VECTOR...

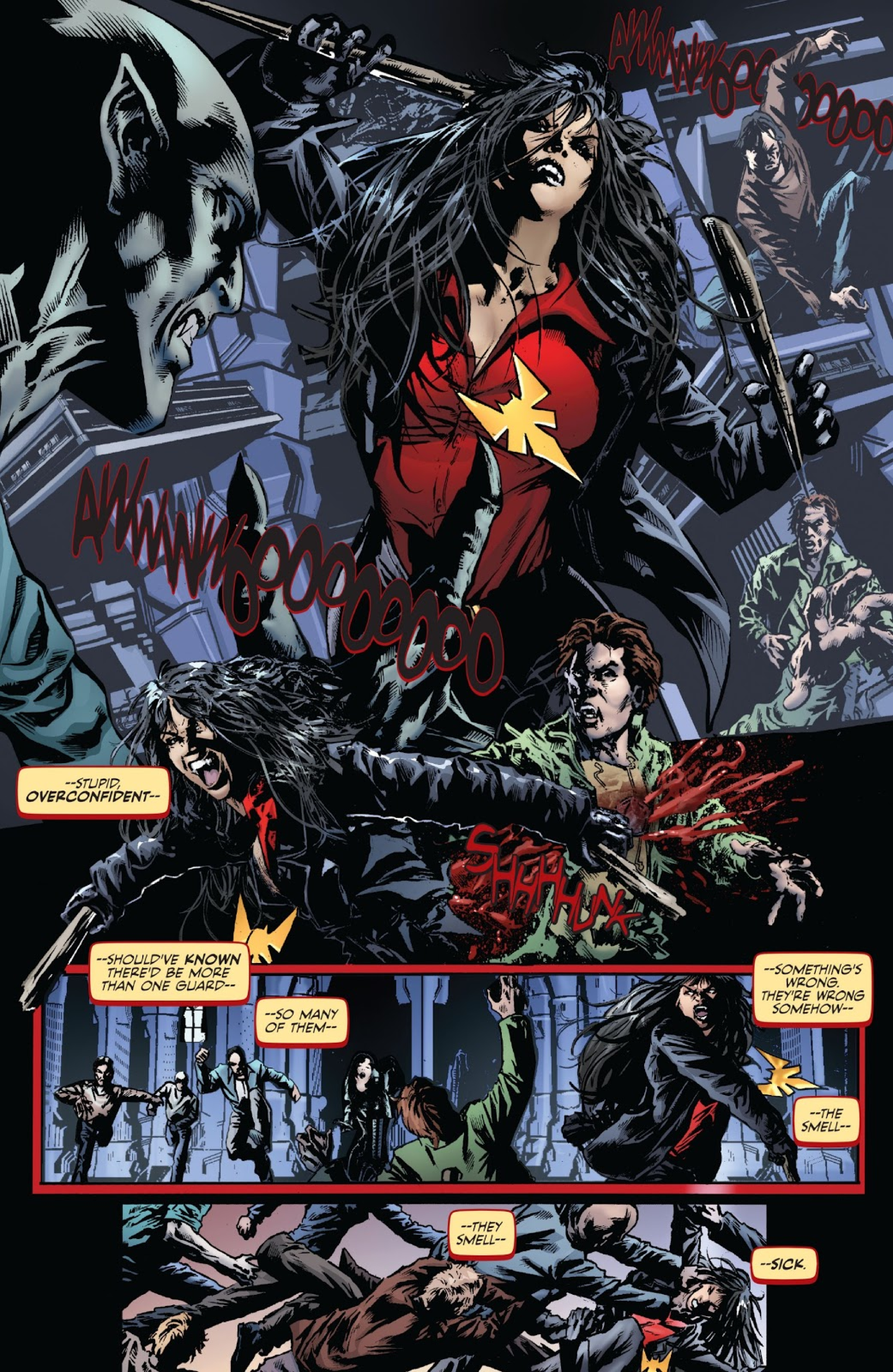

CARMILLA.
UNIVERSITY DISTRICT,
SEATTLE, WA
...YOU CAN WIPE THE VIRUS OUT.
Carmilla
A "BITER CLUB," HE CALLED IT.
milla
COME *ON*, MAN. YOU *GOTTA LET US IN!*
YOU HAVE TO WAIT YOUR *TURN*, SPORT.
NOT A GOOD SIGN.
IT MEANS THERE'S A GOOD-SIZED NEST HERE, WELL-ESTABLISHED.

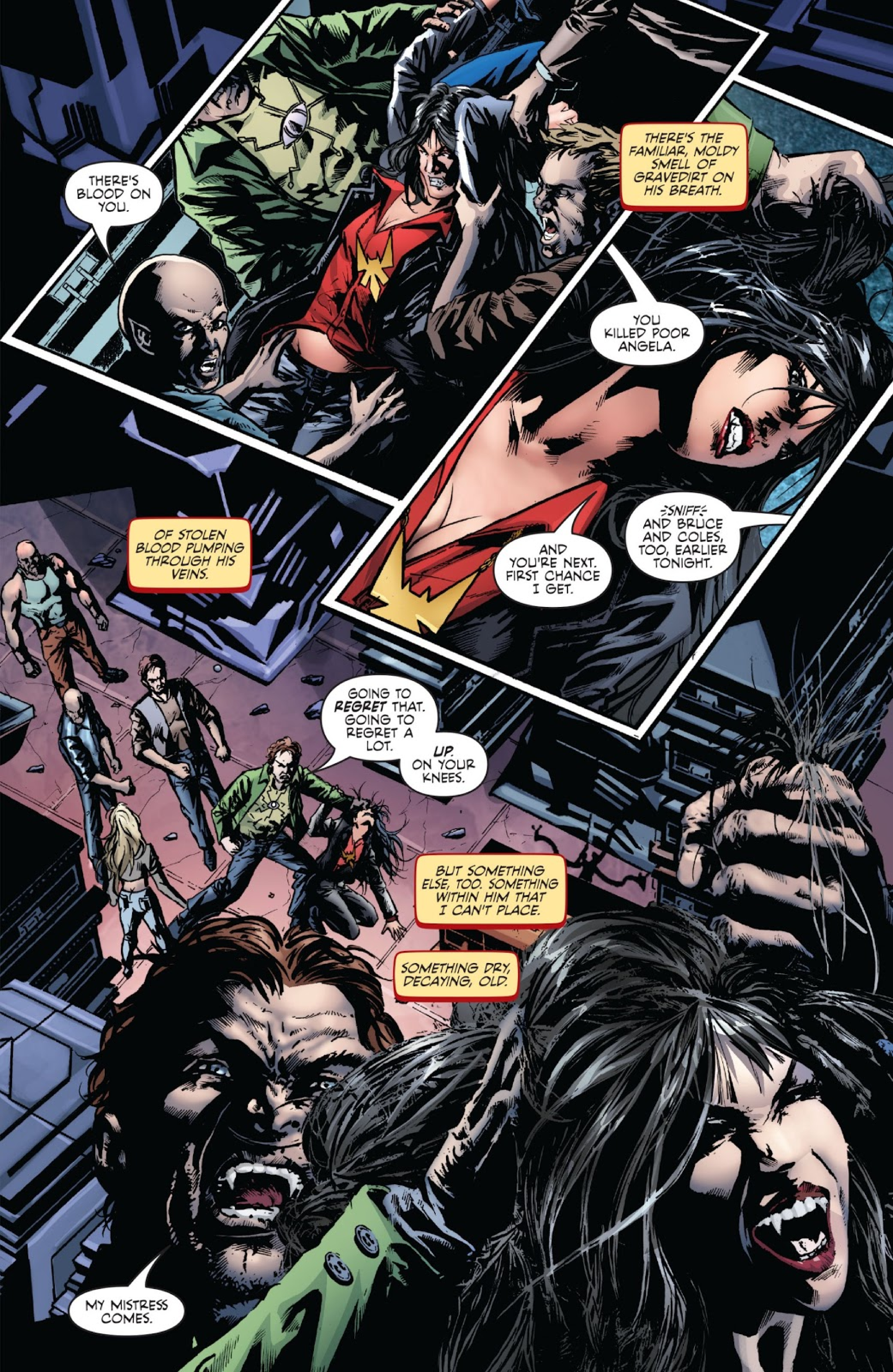

ATTRACTING THE YOUNG AND THE DISAFFECTED LIKE **MOTHS** TO A **FLAME**.
TRENDY, HIP, APPEALING.
THE ONES THAT GET IN SPREADING THE WORD THAT THE PLACE IS SOMETHING **SPECIAL**.
AND THE UNSPOKEN CORROLARY: IF YOU GET IN, **YOU'RE** SOMETHING SPECIAL.
AND THEN OTHER STORIES SURFACE. JUST RUMORS, FROM A FRIEND OF A FRIEND.
STORIES THAT SAY, IF YOU'RE **VERY** LUCKY, AND **VERY** SPECIAL...
Fiho Dragon Printy
Dracu
...YOU JUST MIGHT FIND THE SECRET TO **ETERNAL LIFE**.

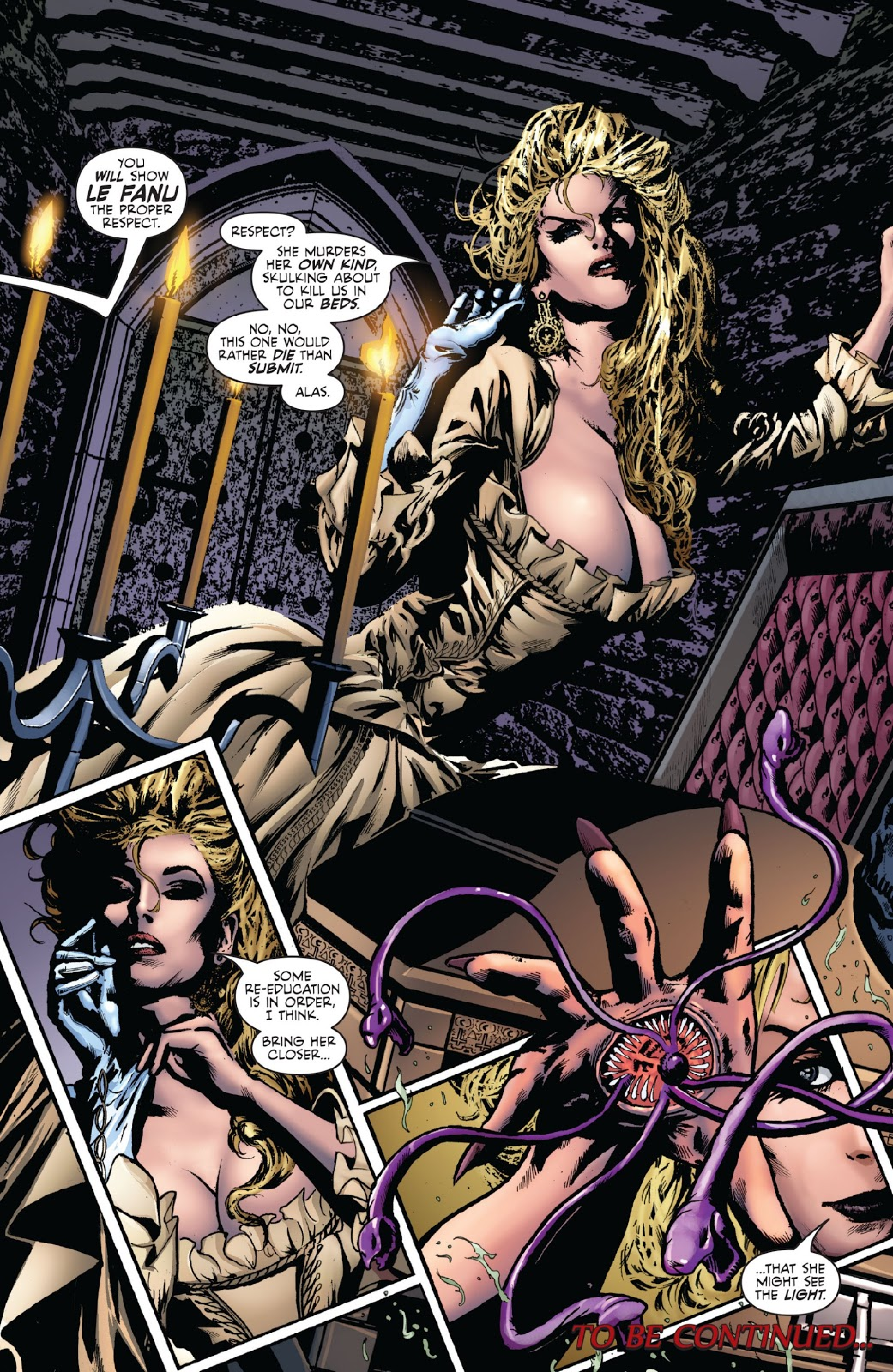

EXQUISITE BAIT.
AND WHERE'S THERE'S BAIT...
...THERE'S A TRAP.
THE BLARING OF THE MUSIC DROWNS OUT THE BOY'S SCREAMS.
THE SCENT OF HUNDREDS OF BODIES, SWEATY AND SOAKED IN CHEAP BEER AND OVERPRICED VODKA, CLOAKS THE ODOR OF DECAY.
HIDES THE COPPERY SCENT OF BLOOD.


IT'S SO **EASY** TO HATE THEM.
THEY WAY THEY LURK IN DARKNESS, STRIKE WITHOUT PITY, AND DANCE AWAY--LAUGHING--BACK INTO THE SHADOWS.
THEY ARE DRACULA'S PITILESS CHILDREN.
CONVINCED THAT NOTHING CAN HARM THEM.
IMMORTAL.
INVINCIBLE.
UNTOUCHABLE.
Sânge de către print
THE FIERCEST PREDATORS AT THE PINNACLE OF THE FOOD CHAIN.
AND THE HUMANS? MERE **CATTLE**. FATTED CALVES FOR THE BLOODY FEAST.

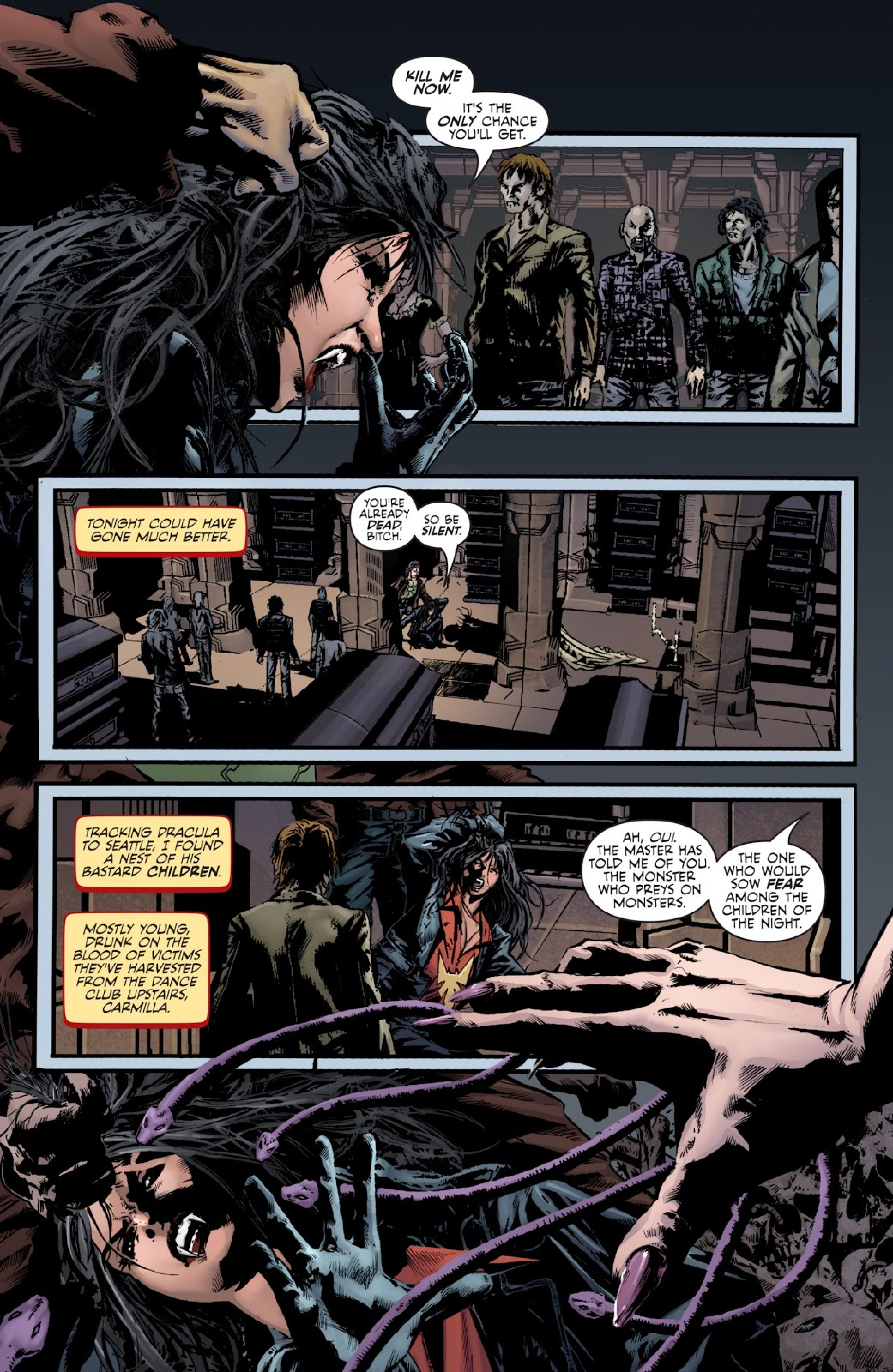

I'VE BEEN AWAY TOO LONG. THEY'VE FORGOTTEN.
THE BOY. HE WAS NO MORE THAN SEVENTEEN.
?!
THERE'S FAR WORSE THAN THEM IN THE SHADOWS.
SHHHUNK
MONSTER.
MMMNGH!
CARELESS.
THIS IS THE NEST'S INNER SANCTUM, AND THEY LEFT IT GUARDED BY A NEWBORN BITER, DRUNK ON THE BLOOD OF HER MOST RECENT VICTIM.
SOMETHING ELSE STRANGE.
THE COFFINS ARE OLD STONE, BUT THE ENGRAVING IS RECENT--

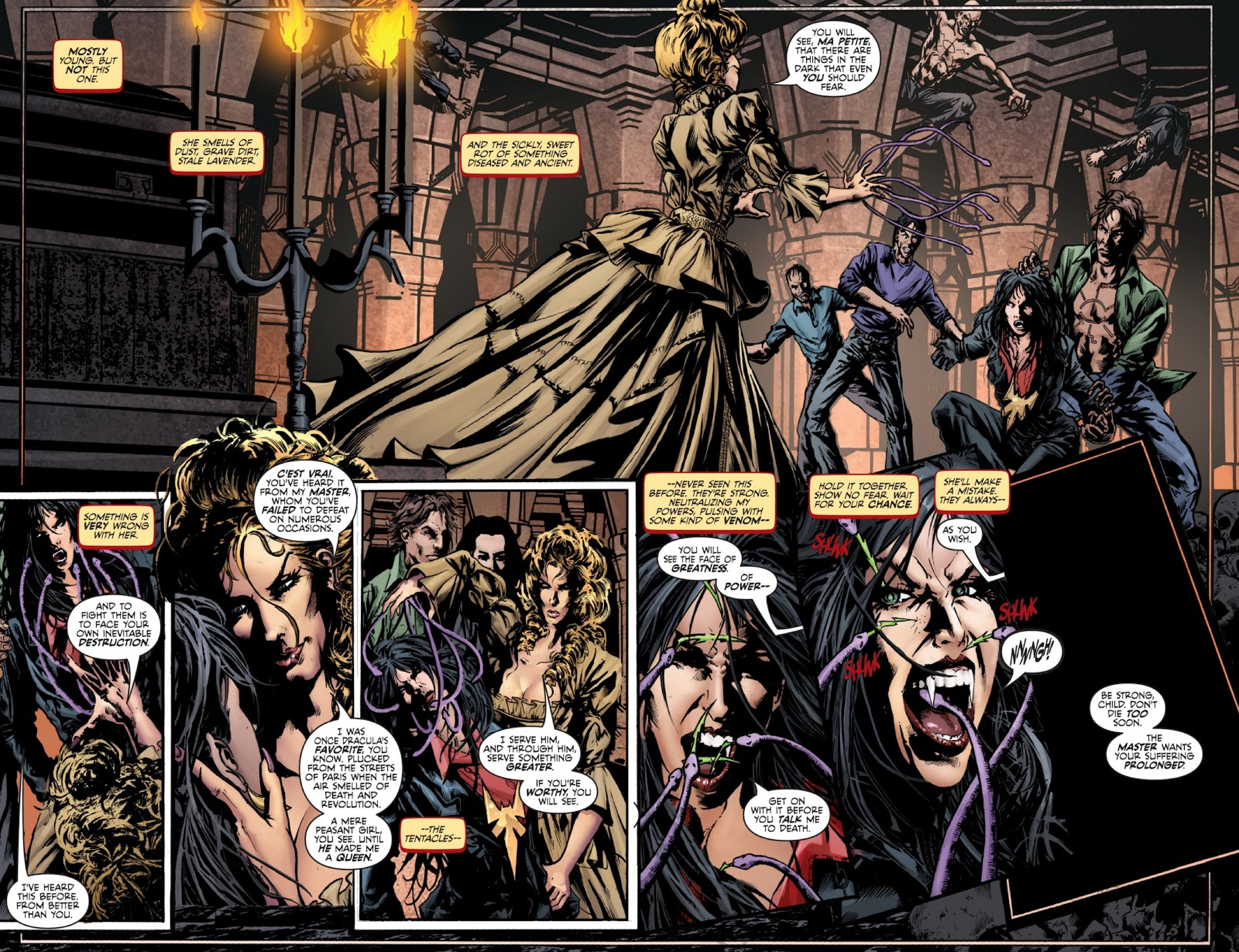

AWWWOOOOOOO
AWWWOOOOOOOOOO
--STUPID, OVERCONFIDENT--
SHHHHUNK
--SHOULD'VE KNOWN THERE'D BE MORE THAN ONE GUARD--
--SO MANY OF THEM--
--SOMETHING'S WRONG. THEY'RE WRONG SOMEHOW--
--THE SMELL--
--THEY SMELL--
--SICK.

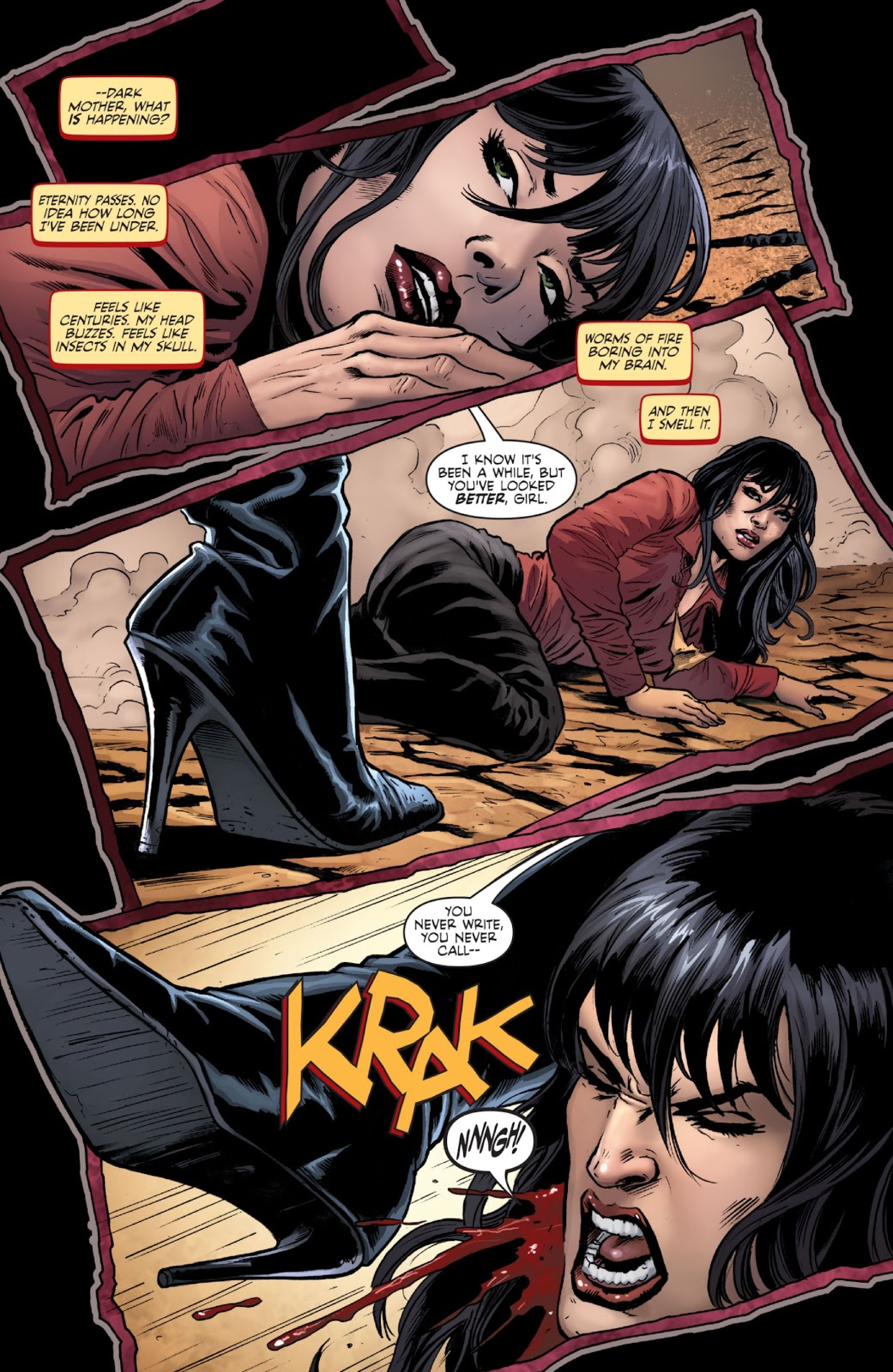

THERE'S BLOOD ON YOU.
THERE'S THE FAMILIAR, MOLDY SMELL OF GRAVEDIRT ON HIS BREATH.
YOU KILLED POOR ANGELA.
=SNIFF= AND BRUCE AND COLES, TOO, EARLIER TONIGHT.
AND YOU'RE NEXT. FIRST CHANCE I GET.
OF STOLEN BLOOD PUMPING THROUGH HIS VEINS.
GOING TO **REGRET** THAT. GOING TO REGRET A LOT.
UP. ON YOUR KNEES.
BUT SOMETHING ELSE, TOO. SOMETHING WITHIN HIM THAT I CAN'T PLACE.
SOMETHING DRY, DECAYING, OLD.
MY MISTRESS COMES.

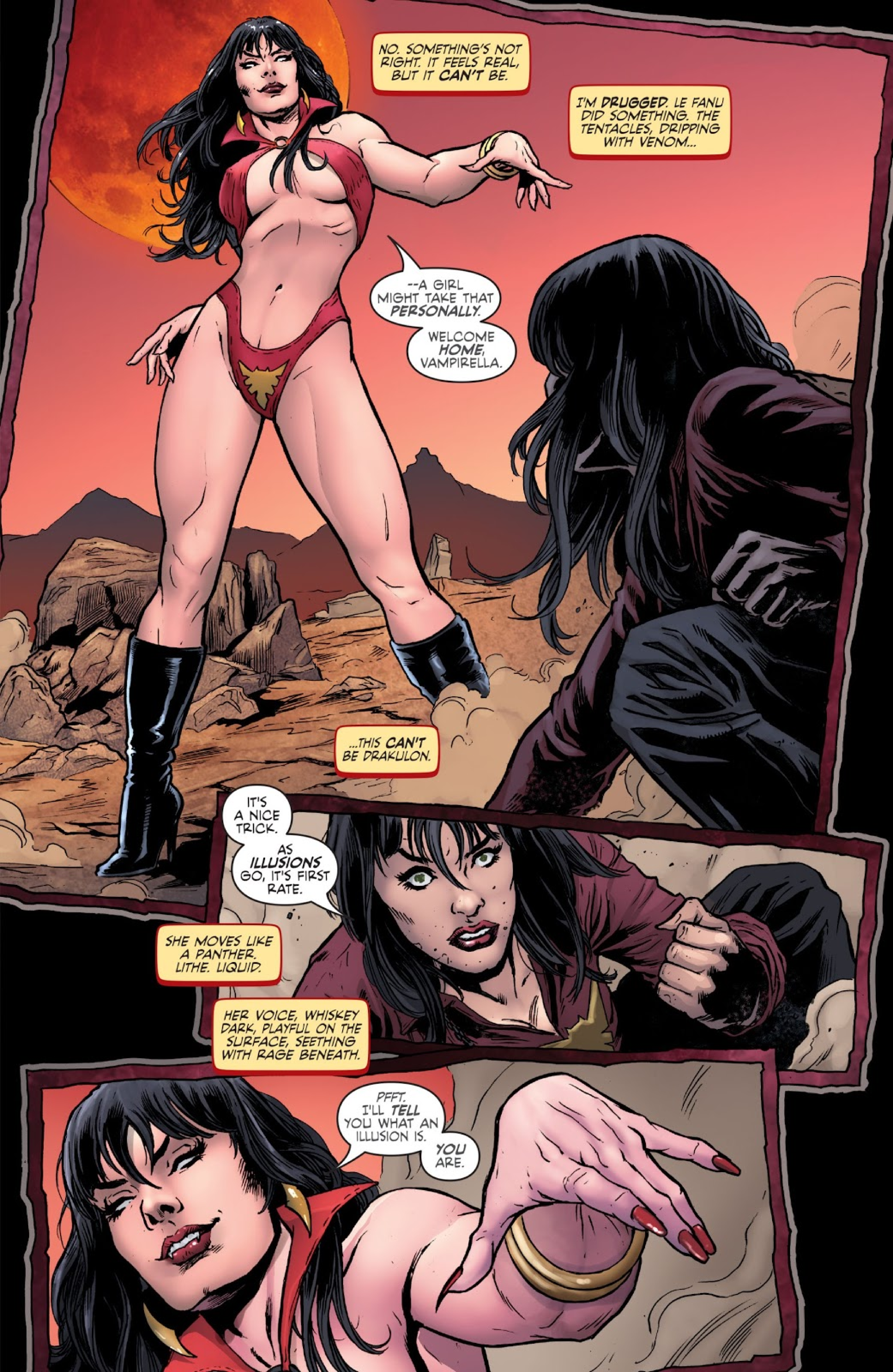

YOU **WILL** SHOW **LE FANU** THE PROPER RESPECT.
RESPECT?
SHE MURDERS HER **OWN KIND**, SKULKING ABOUT TO KILL US IN OUR **BEDS**.
NO, NO, THIS ONE WOULD RATHER **DIE** THAN **SUBMIT**.
ALAS.
SOME RE-EDUCATION IS IN ORDER, I THINK.
BRING HER CLOSER...
...THAT SHE MIGHT SEE THE **LIGHT**.
TO BE CONTINUED...

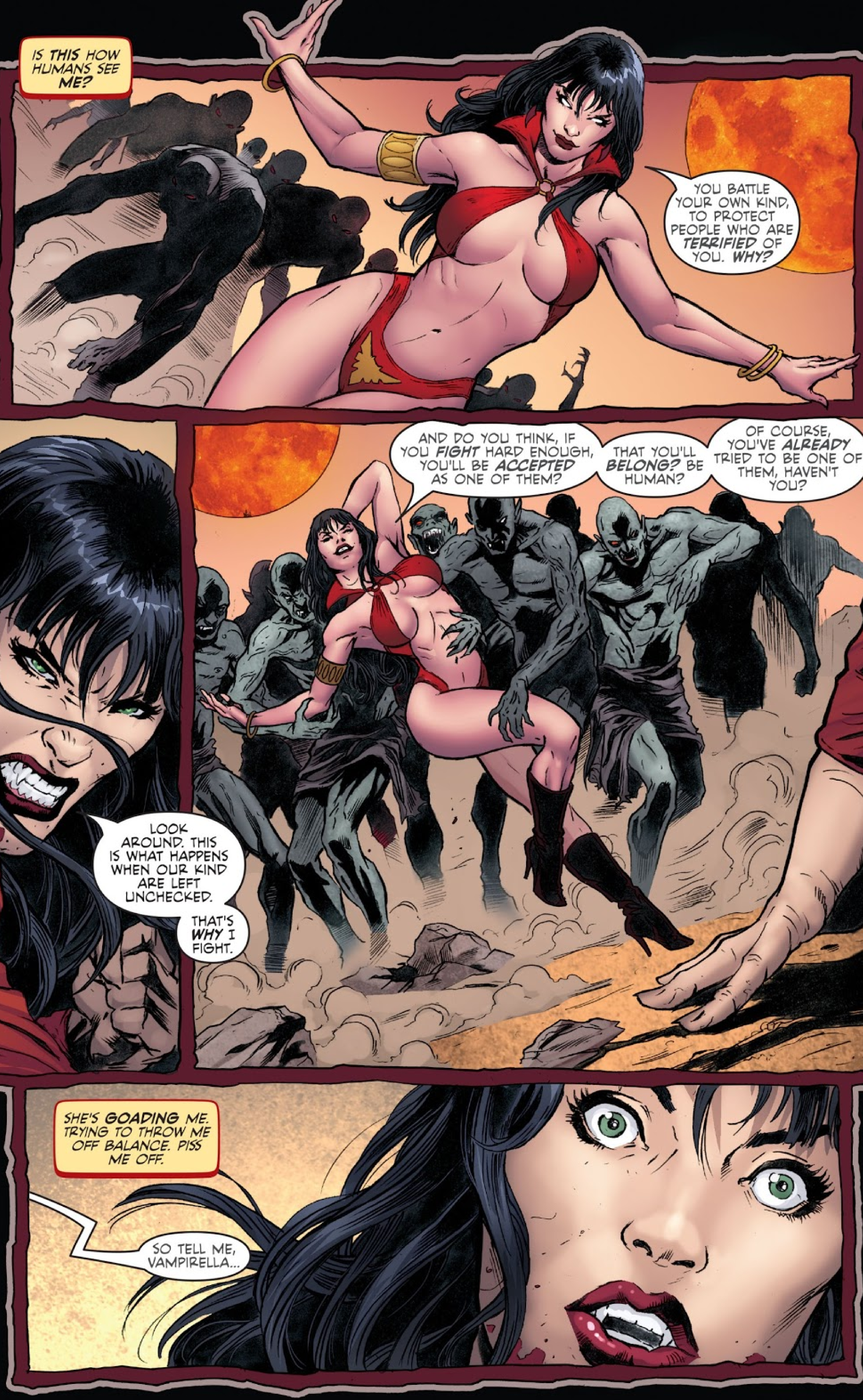
DYNAMITE®
2
VAMPIRELLA®
2010

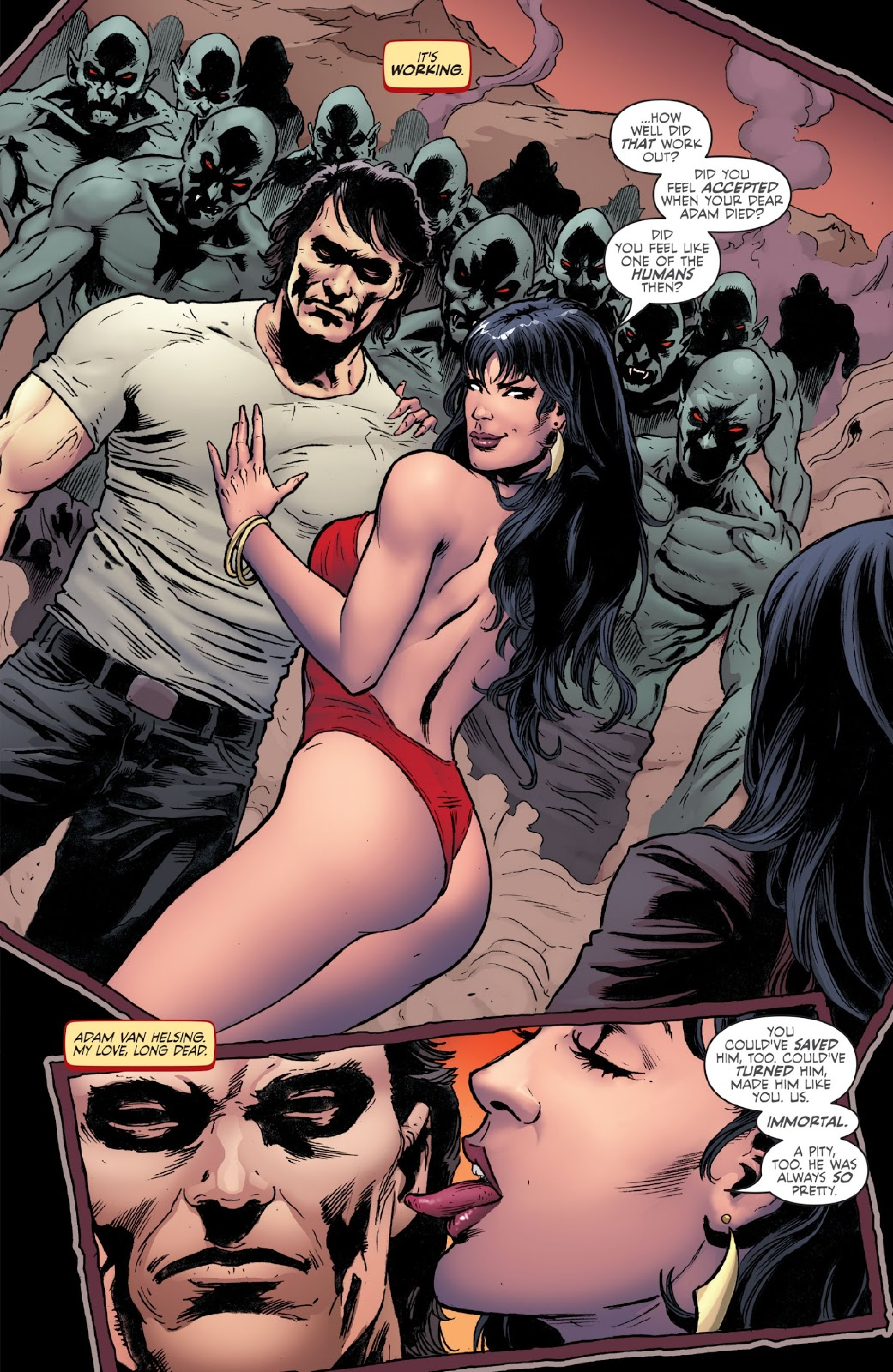

KILL ME NOW.
IT'S THE *ONLY* CHANCE YOU'LL GET.
TONIGHT COULD HAVE GONE MUCH BETTER.
YOU'RE ALREADY *DEAD*, BITCH.
SO BE *SILENT*.
TRACKING DRACULA TO SEATTLE, I FOUND A NEST OF HIS BASTARD **CHILDREN**.
MOSTLY YOUNG, DRUNK ON THE BLOOD OF VICTIMS THEY'VE HARVESTED FROM THE DANCE CLUB UPSTAIRS, CARMILLA.
AH, *OUI*. THE MASTER HAS TOLD ME OF YOU. THE MONSTER WHO PREYS ON MONSTERS.
THE ONE WHO WOULD SOW *FEAR* AMONG THE CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT.

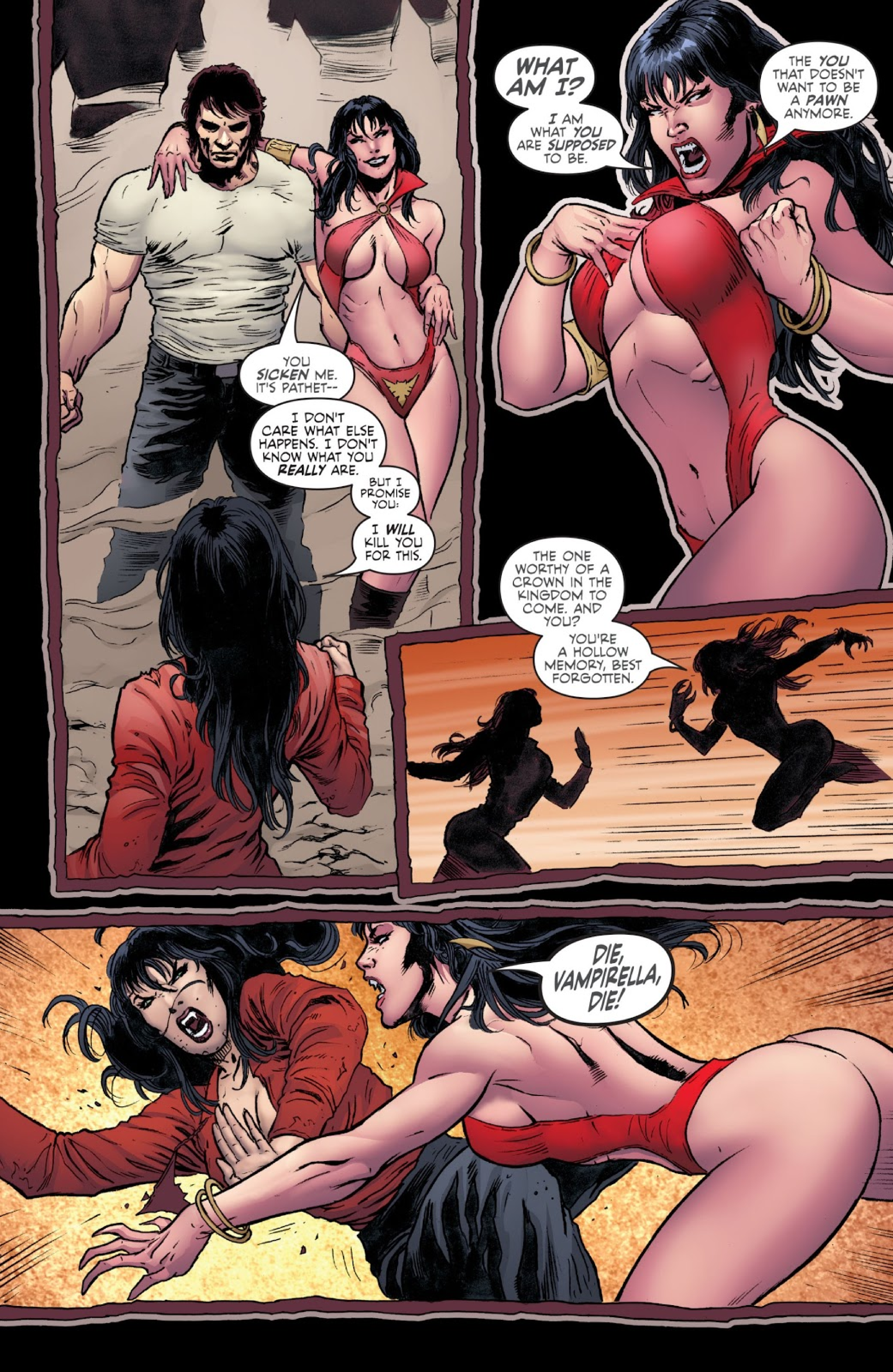

MOSTLY YOUNG, BUT NOT THIS ONE.
SHE SMELLS OF DUST, GRAVE DIRT, STALE LAVENDER.
AND THE SICKLY, SWEET ROT OF SOMETHING DISEASED AND ANCIENT.
YOU WILL SEE, MA PETITE, THAT THERE ARE THINGS IN THE DARK THAT EVEN YOU SHOULD FEAR.
SOMETHING IS VERY WRONG WITH HER.
AND TO FIGHT THEM IS TO FACE YOUR OWN INEVITABLE DESTRUCTION.
I'VE HEARD THIS BEFORE. FROM BETTER THAN YOU.
C'EST VRAI. YOU'VE HEARD IT FROM MY MASTER, WHOM YOU'VE FAILED TO DEFEAT ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS.
I WAS ONCE DRACULA'S FAVORITE, YOU KNOW. PLUCKED FROM THE STREETS OF PARIS WHEN THE AIR SMELLED OF DEATH AND REVOLUTION.
A MERE PEASANT GIRL, YOU SEE. UNTIL HE MADE ME A QUEEN.
I SERVE HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, SERVE SOMETHING GREATER.
IF YOU'RE WORTHY, YOU WILL SEE.
--THE TENTACLES--
--NEVER SEEN THIS BEFORE. THEY'RE STRONG. NEUTRALIZING MY POWERS, PULSING WITH SOME KIND OF VENOM--
YOU WILL SEE THE FACE OF GREATNESS.
OF POWER--
GET ON WITH IT BEFORE YOU TALK ME TO DEATH.
HOLD IT TOGETHER. SHOW NO FEAR. WAIT FOR YOUR CHANCE.
SHE'LL MAKE A MISTAKE. THEY ALWAYS--
AS YOU WISH.
SHUNK
SHUNK
SHUNK
NNNNGH!
BE STRONG, CHILD. DON'T DIE TOO SOON.
THE MASTER WANTS YOUR SUFFERING PROLONGED.

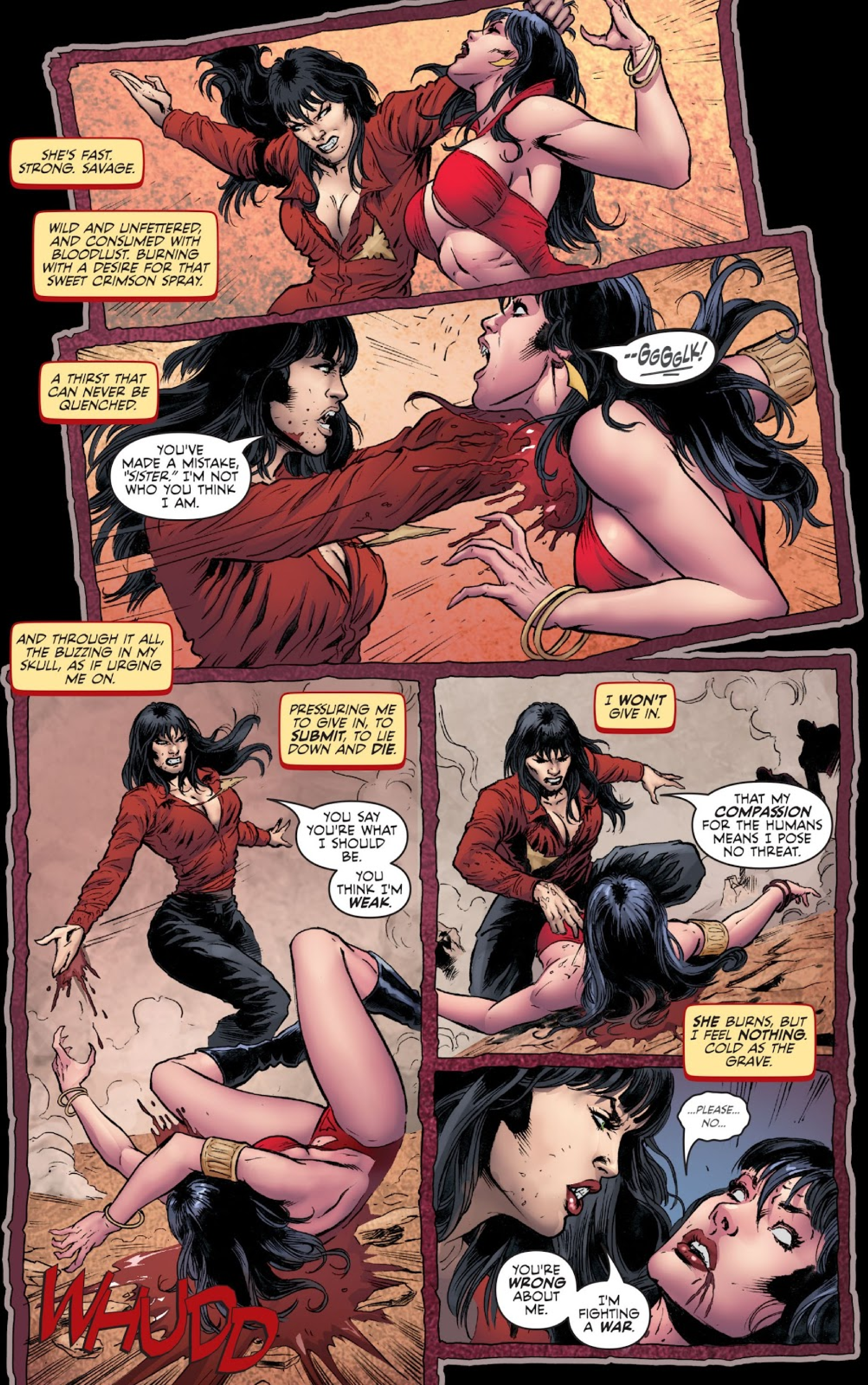

--DARK MOTHER, WHAT **IS** HAPPENING?
ETERNITY PASSES. NO IDEA HOW LONG I'VE BEEN UNDER.
FEELS LIKE CENTURIES. MY HEAD BUZZES. FEELS LIKE INSECTS IN MY SKULL.
WORMS OF FIRE BORING INTO MY BRAIN.
AND THEN I SMELL IT.
I KNOW IT'S BEEN A WHILE, BUT YOU'VE LOOKED **BETTER**, GIRL.
YOU NEVER WRITE, YOU NEVER CALL--
KRAK
NNNGH!

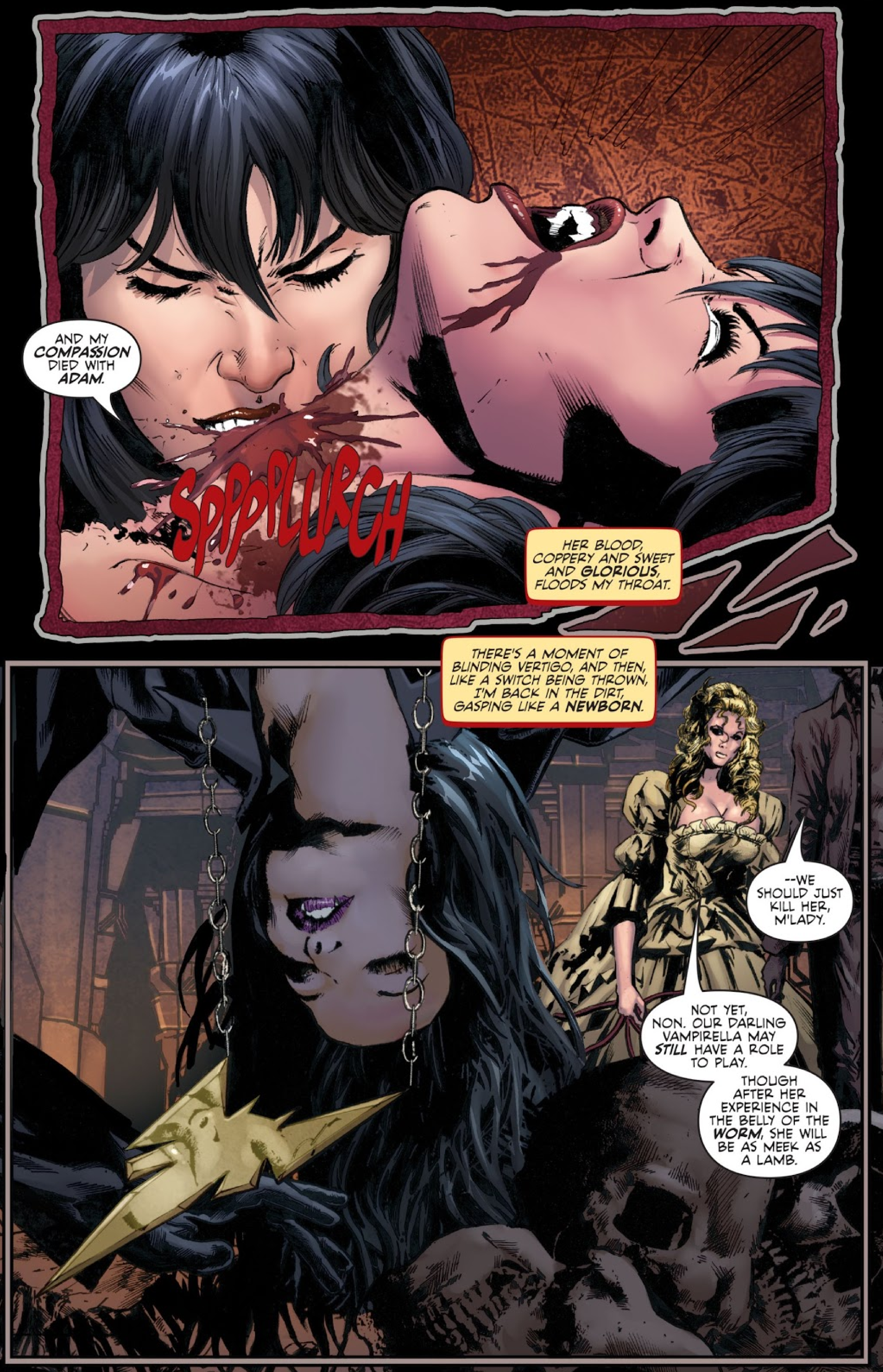

NO. SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT. IT FEELS REAL, BUT IT **CAN'T** BE.
I'M **DRUGGED**. LE FANU DID SOMETHING. THE TENTACLES, DRIPPING WITH VENOM...
--A GIRL MIGHT TAKE THAT **PERSONALLY**.
WELCOME **HOME**, VAMPIRELLA.
...THIS **CAN'T** BE DRAKULON.
IT'S A NICE TRICK.
AS **ILLUSIONS** GO, IT'S FIRST RATE.
SHE MOVES LIKE A PANTHER. LITHE. LIQUID.
HER VOICE, WHISKEY DARK, PLAYFUL ON THE SURFACE, SEETHING WITH RAGE BENEATH.
PFFT. I'LL **TELL** YOU WHAT AN ILLUSION IS.
YOU ARE.

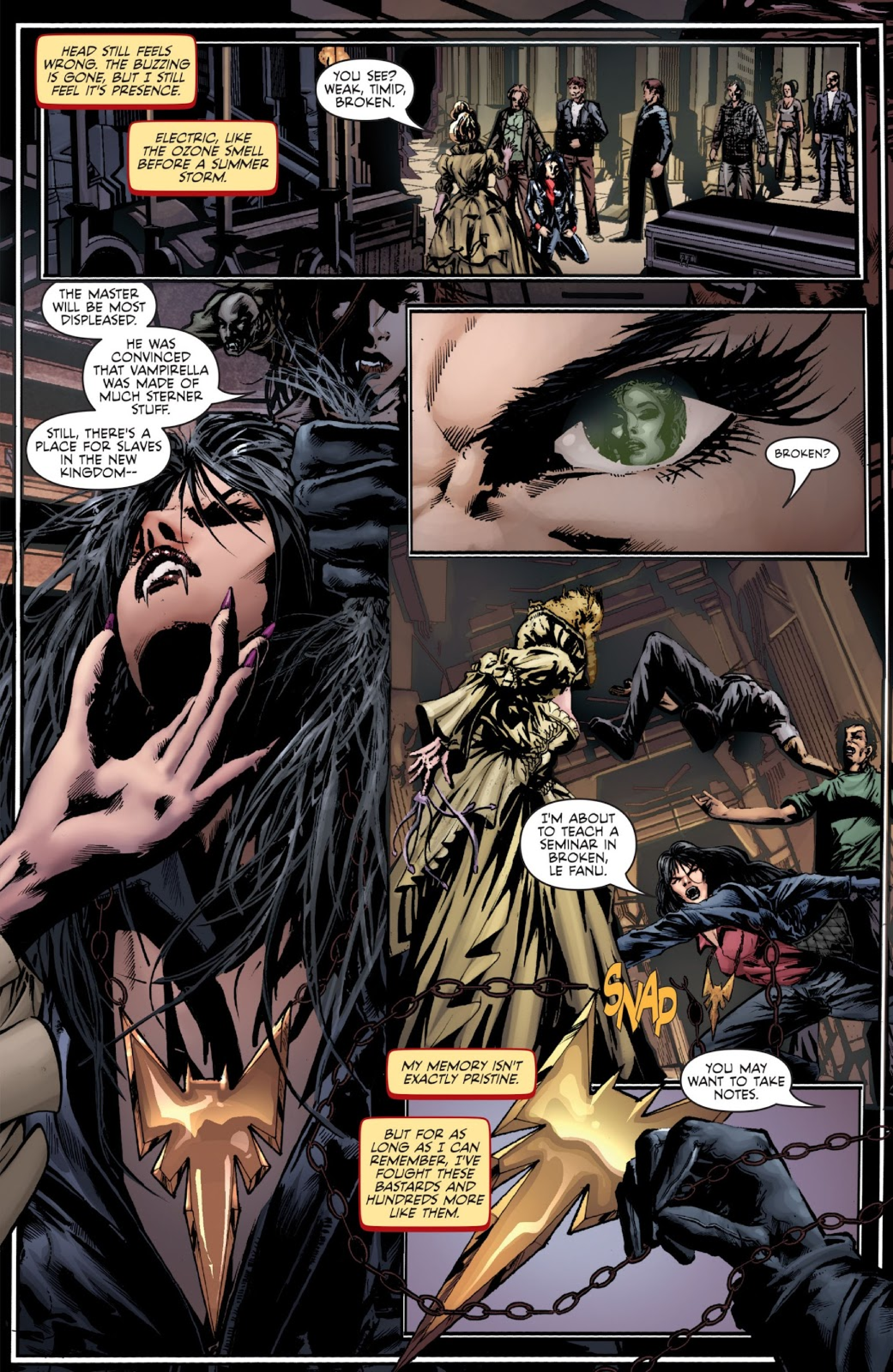

IS **THIS** HOW HUMANS SEE **ME?**
YOU BATTLE YOUR OWN KIND, TO PROTECT PEOPLE WHO ARE ***TERRIFIED*** OF YOU. ***WHY?***
AND DO YOU THINK, IF YOU ***FIGHT*** HARD ENOUGH, YOU'LL BE ***ACCEPTED*** AS ONE OF THEM?
THAT YOU'LL ***BELONG?*** BE HUMAN?
OF COURSE, YOU'VE ***ALREADY*** TRIED TO BE ONE OF THEM, HAVEN'T YOU?
LOOK AROUND. THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN OUR KIND ARE LEFT UNCHECKED.
THAT'S ***WHY*** I FIGHT.
SHE'S ***GOADING*** *ME. TRYING TO THROW ME OFF BALANCE. PISS ME OFF.*
SO TELL ME, VAMPIRELLA...

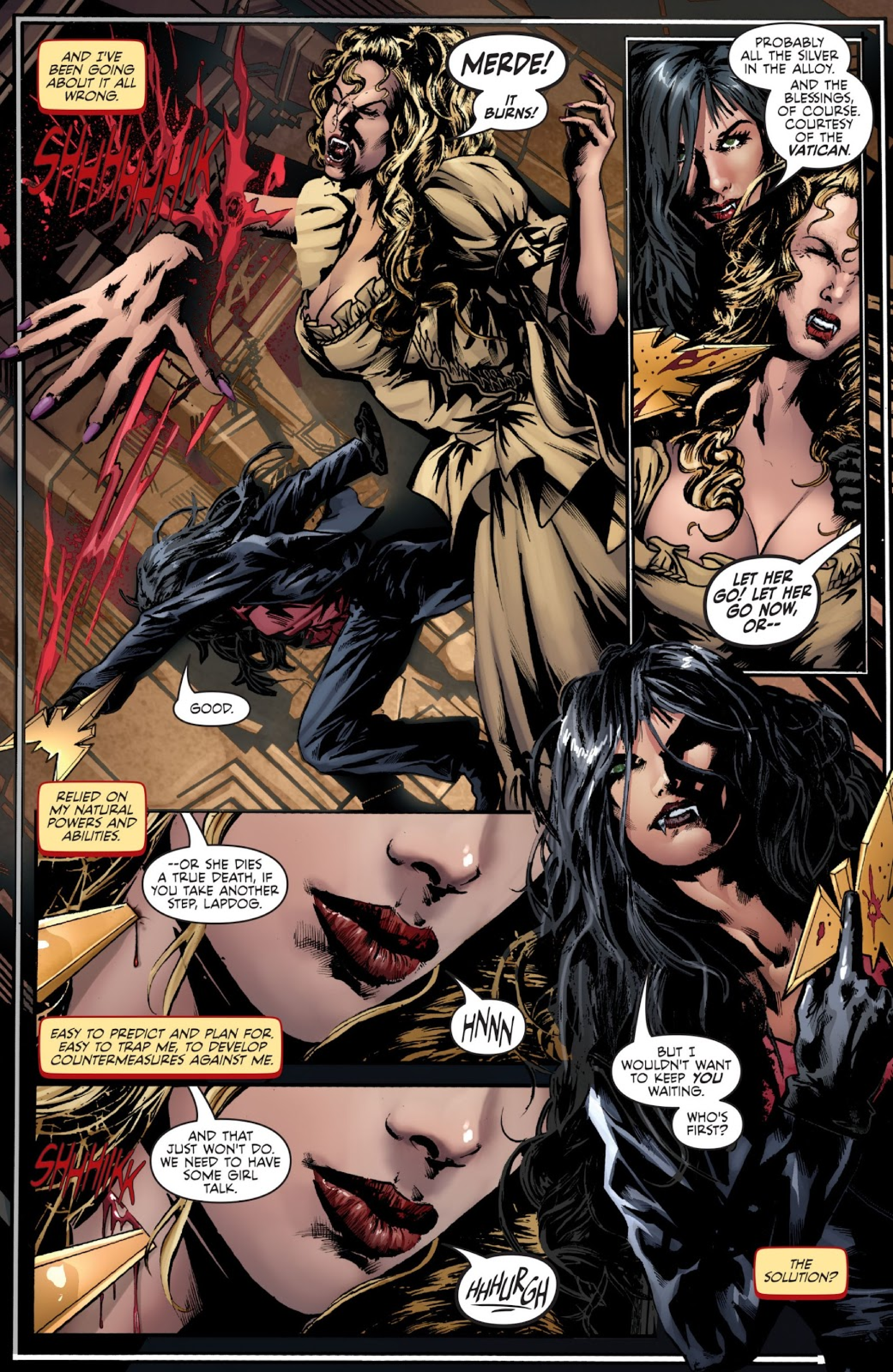

IT'S WORKING.
...HOW WELL DID THAT WORK OUT?
DID YOU FEEL ACCEPTED WHEN YOUR DEAR ADAM DIED?
DID YOU FEEL LIKE ONE OF THE HUMANS THEN?
ADAM VAN HELSING. MY LOVE, LONG DEAD.
YOU COULD'VE SAVED HIM, TOO. COULD'VE TURNED HIM, MADE HIM LIKE YOU. US.
IMMORTAL.
A PITY, TOO. HE WAS ALWAYS SO PRETTY.

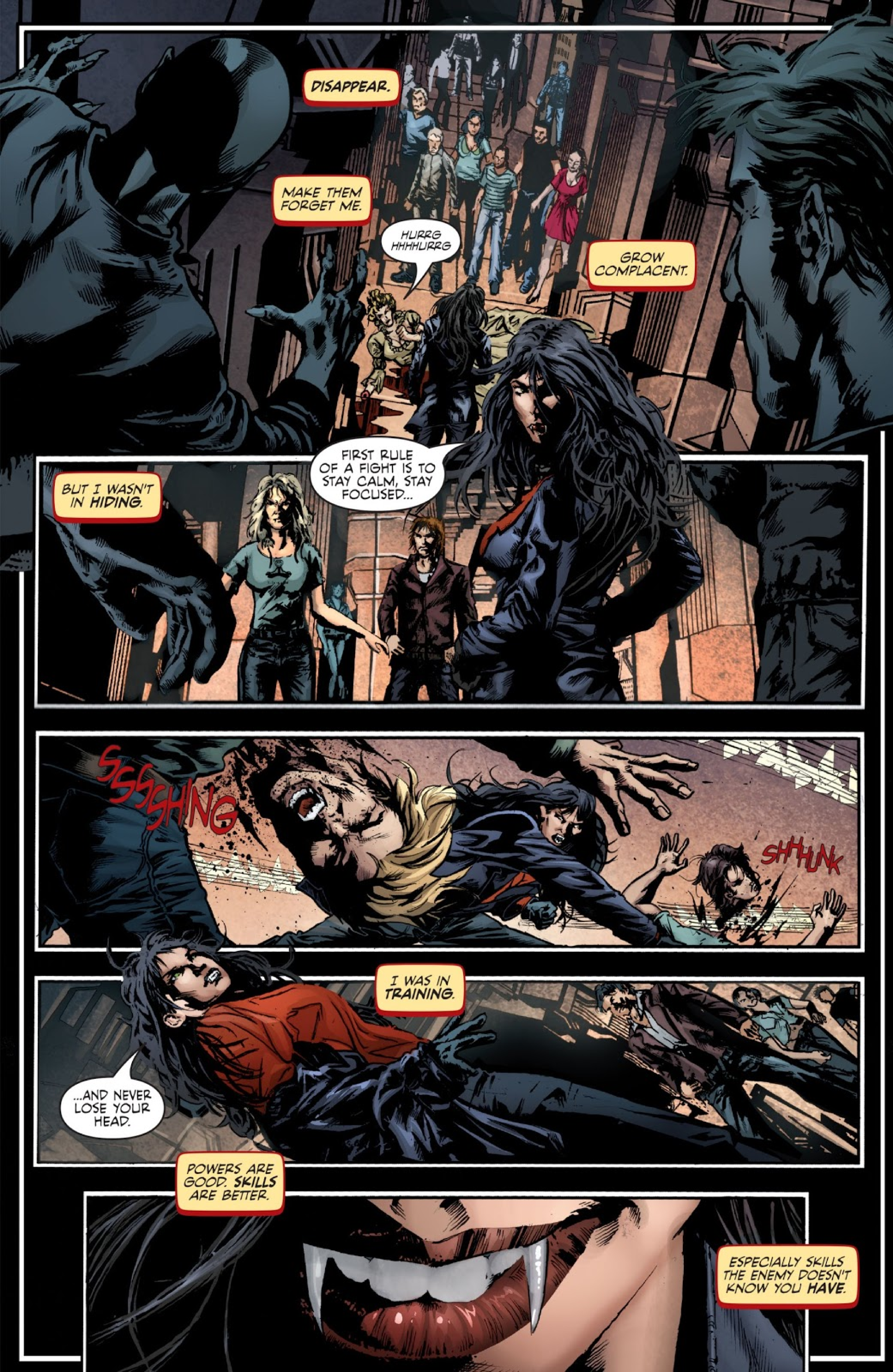

YOU *SICKEN* ME. IT'S PATHET--
I DON'T CARE WHAT ELSE HAPPENS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU *REALLY* ARE.
BUT I PROMISE YOU:
I *WILL* KILL YOU FOR THIS.
WHAT AM I?
I AM WHAT *YOU* ARE *SUPPOSED* TO BE.
THE *YOU* THAT DOESN'T WANT TO BE A *PAWN* ANYMORE.
THE ONE WORTHY OF A CROWN IN THE KINGDOM TO COME. AND YOU?
YOU'RE A HOLLOW MEMORY, BEST FORGOTTEN.
DIE, VAMPIRELLA, DIE!

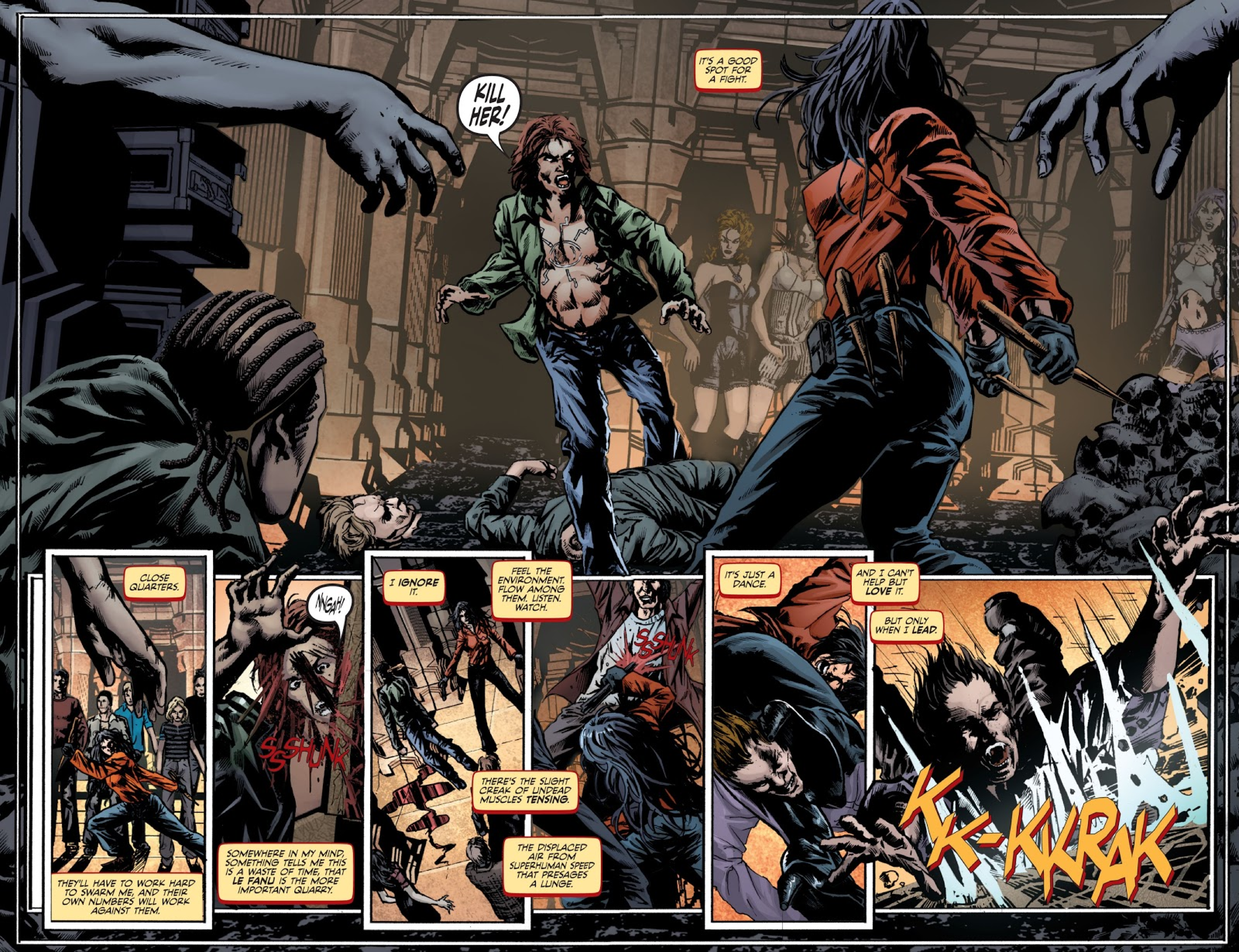

SHE'S FAST. STRONG. SAVAGE.
WILD AND UNFETTERED, AND CONSUMED WITH BLOODLUST. BURNING WITH A DESIRE FOR THAT SWEET CRIMSON SPRAY.
A THIRST THAT CAN NEVER BE QUENCHED.
--GGGGLK!
YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKE, "SISTER." I'M NOT WHO YOU THINK I AM.
AND THROUGH IT ALL, THE BUZZING IN MY SKULL, AS IF URGING ME ON.
PRESSURING ME TO GIVE IN, TO SUBMIT, TO LIE DOWN AND DIE.
YOU SAY YOU'RE WHAT I SHOULD BE.
YOU THINK I'M WEAK.
WHUDD
I WON'T GIVE IN.
THAT MY COMPASSION FOR THE HUMANS MEANS I POSE NO THREAT.
SHE BURNS, BUT I FEEL NOTHING. COLD AS THE GRAVE.
...PLEASE... NO...
YOU'RE WRONG ABOUT ME.
I'M FIGHTING A WAR.

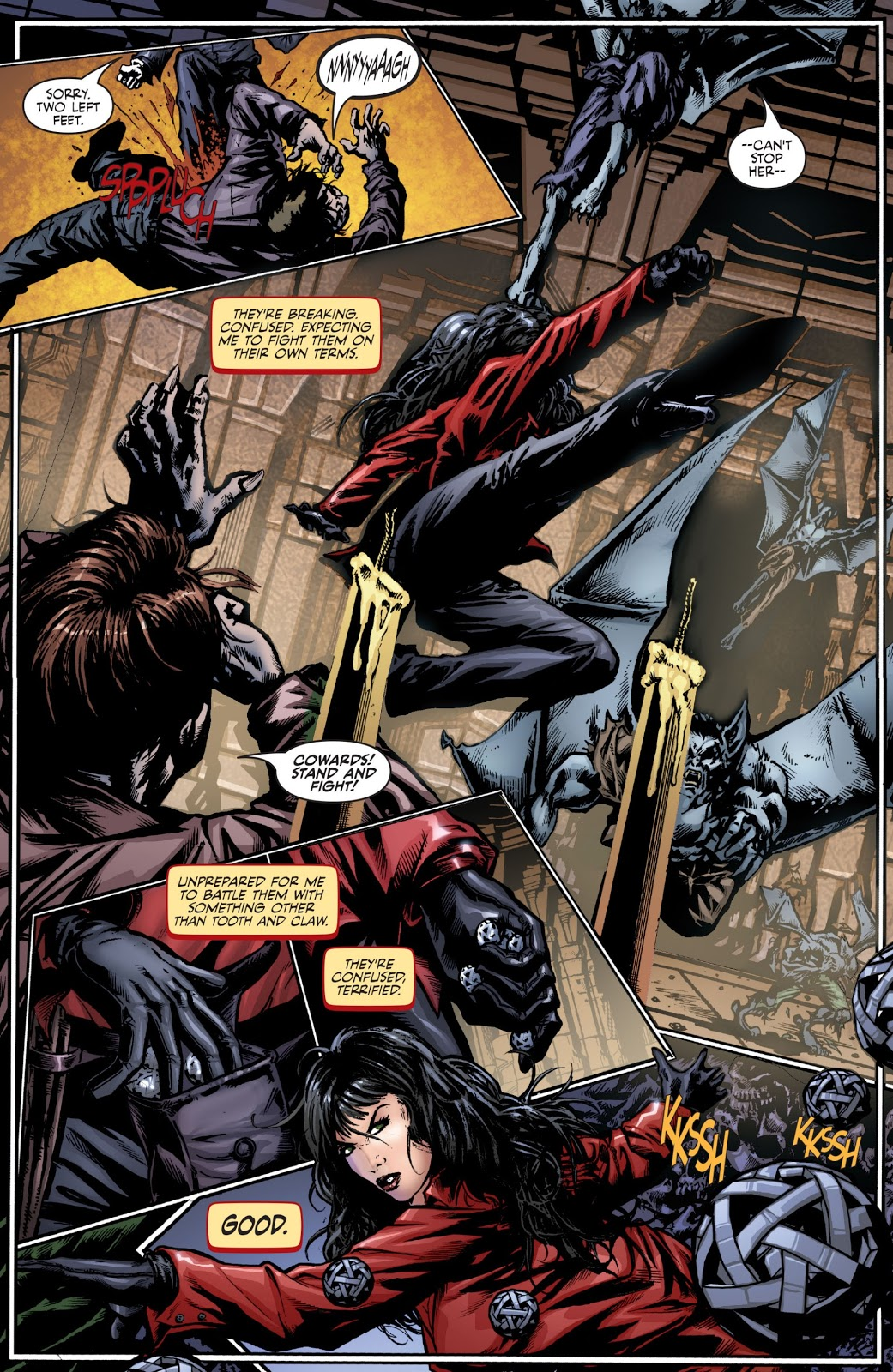

AND MY COMPASSION DIED WITH ADAM.
SPPPPLURCH
HER BLOOD, COPPERY AND SWEET AND GLORIOUS, FLOODS MY THROAT.
THERE'S A MOMENT OF BLINDING VERTIGO, AND THEN, LIKE A SWITCH BEING THROWN, I'M BACK IN THE DIRT, GASPING LIKE A NEWBORN.
--WE SHOULD JUST KILL HER, M'LADY.
NOT YET, NON. OUR DARLING VAMPIRELLA MAY STILL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY.
THOUGH AFTER HER EXPERIENCE IN THE BELLY OF THE WORM, SHE WILL BE AS MEEK AS A LAMB.

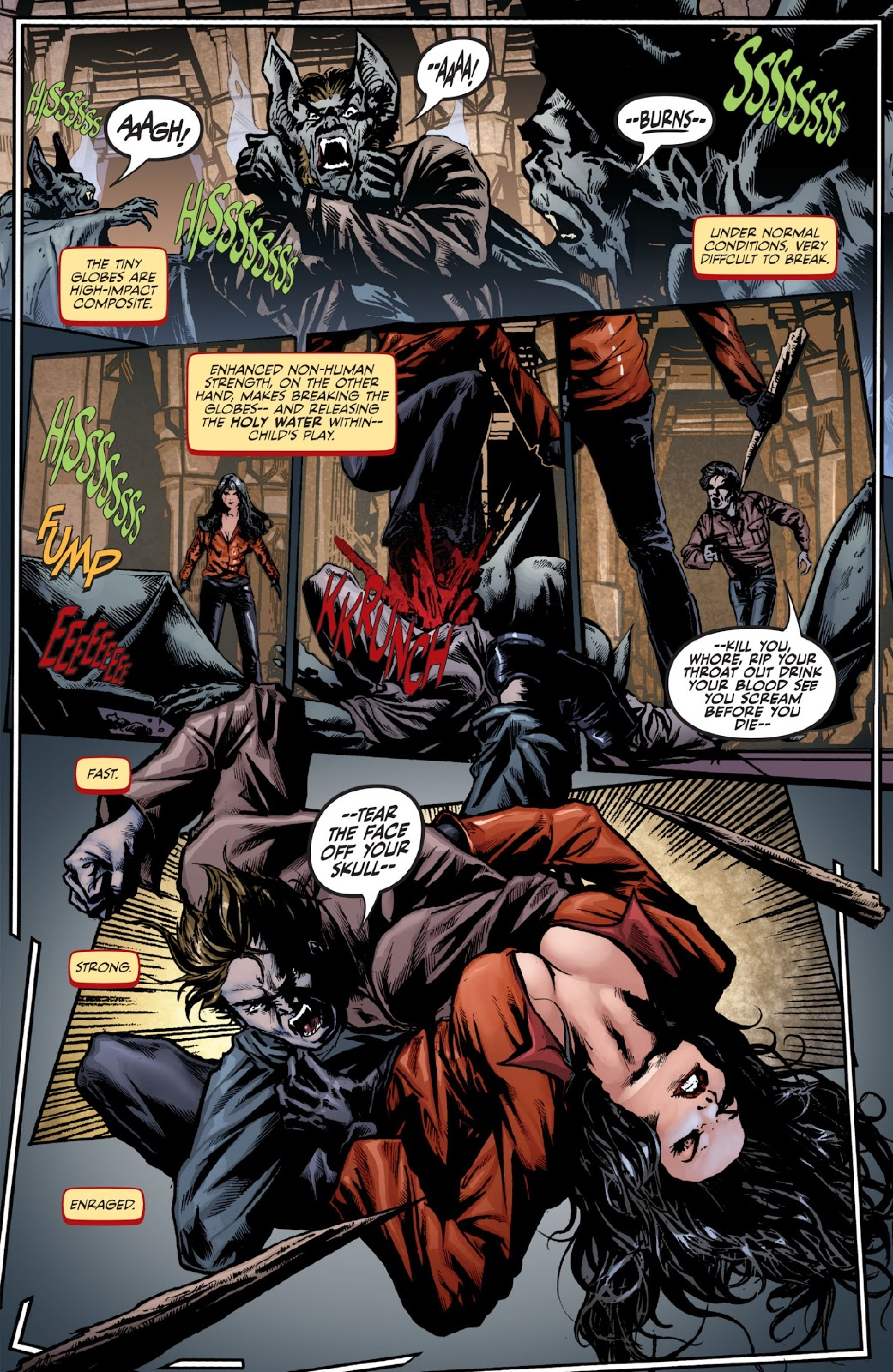

HEAD STILL FEELS WRONG. THE BUZZING IS GONE, BUT I STILL FEEL IT'S PRESENCE.
ELECTRIC, LIKE THE OZONE SMELL BEFORE A SUMMER STORM.
YOU SEE? WEAK, TIMID, BROKEN.
THE MASTER WILL BE MOST DISPLEASED.
HE WAS CONVINCED THAT VAMPIRELLA WAS MADE OF MUCH STERNER STUFF.
STILL, THERE'S A PLACE FOR SLAVES IN THE NEW KINGDOM--
BROKEN?
I'M ABOUT TO TEACH A SEMINAR IN BROKEN, LE FANU.
SNAP
MY MEMORY ISN'T EXACTLY PRISTINE.
BUT FOR AS LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER, I'VE FOUGHT THESE BASTARDS AND HUNDREDS MORE LIKE THEM.
YOU MAY WANT TO TAKE NOTES.

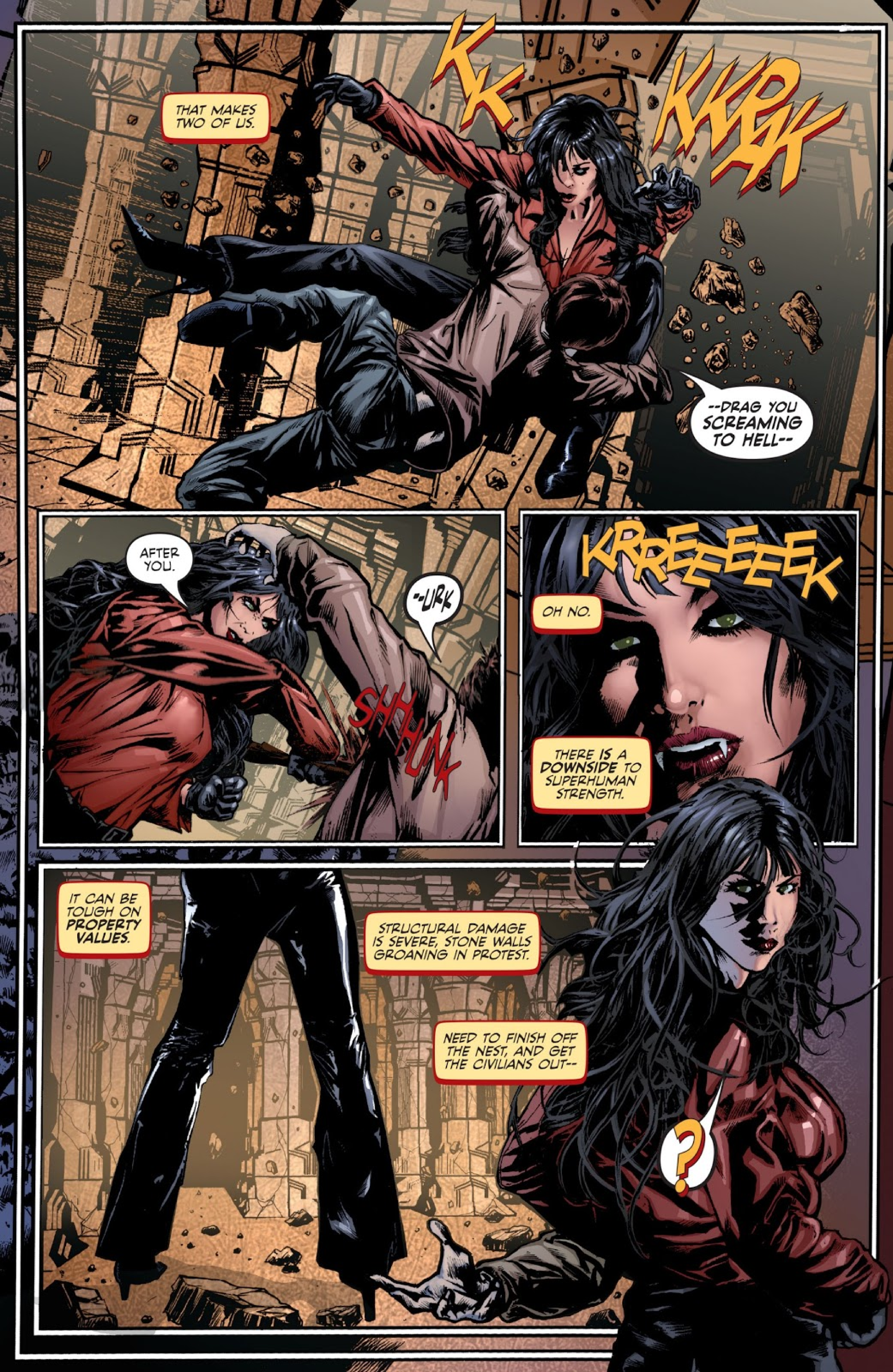

AND I'VE BEEN GOING ABOUT IT ALL WRONG.
SHHHHHHK
MERDE!
IT BURNS!
PROBABLY ALL THE SILVER IN THE ALLOY.
AND THE BLESSINGS, OF COURSE. COURTESY OF THE *VATICAN*.
LET HER GO! LET HER GO NOW, OR--
GOOD.
RELIED ON MY NATURAL POWERS AND ABILITIES.
--OR SHE DIES A TRUE DEATH, IF YOU TAKE ANOTHER STEP, LAPDOG.
HNNN
EASY TO PREDICT AND PLAN FOR. EASY TO TRAP ME, TO DEVELOP COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST ME.
BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO KEEP *YOU* WAITING.
WHO'S FIRST?
AND THAT JUST WON'T DO. WE NEED TO HAVE SOME GIRL TALK.
SHHHIKK
HHHURGH
THE SOLUTION?

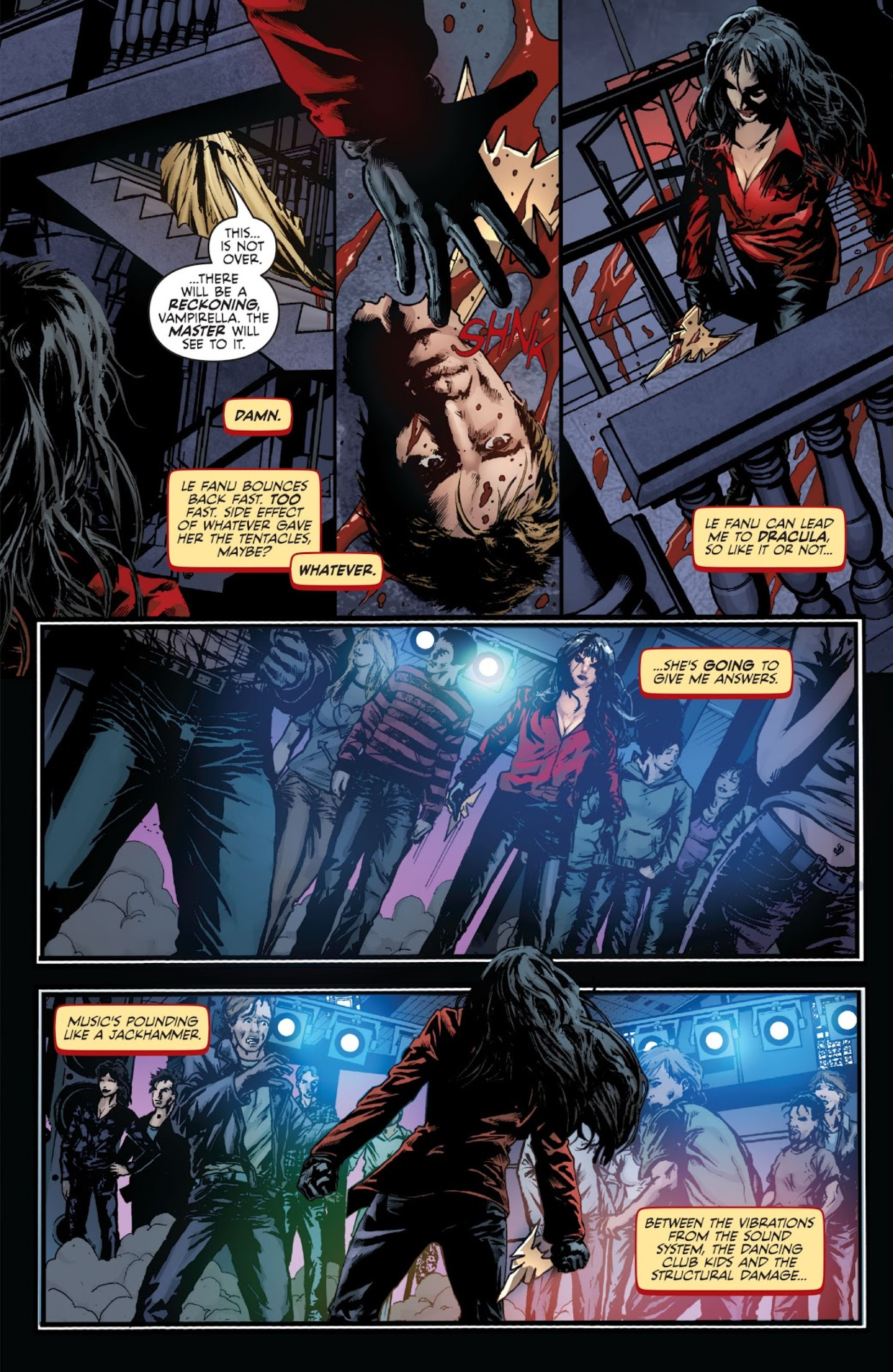

DISAPPEAR.
MAKE THEM FORGET ME.
HURRG HHHHURRG
GROW COMPLACENT.
BUT I WASN'T IN HIDING.
FIRST RULE OF A FIGHT IS TO STAY CALM, STAY FOCUSED...
SSSSHING
SHHHUNK
I WAS IN TRAINING.
...AND NEVER LOSE YOUR HEAD.
POWERS ARE GOOD. SKILLS ARE BETTER.
ESPECIALLY SKILLS THE ENEMY DOESN'T KNOW YOU HAVE.

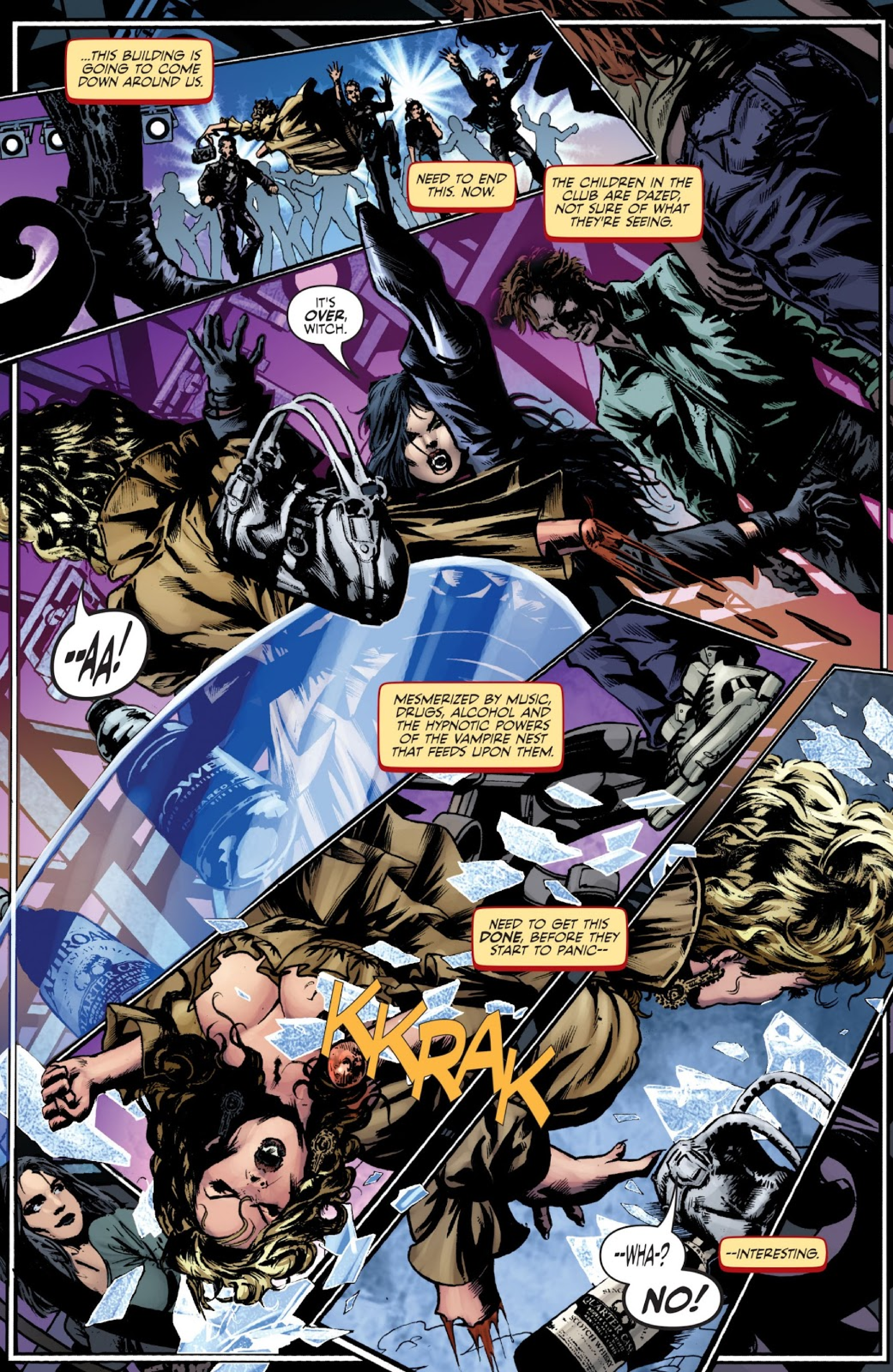

KILL HER!
IT'S A GOOD SPOT FOR A FIGHT.
CLOSE QUARTERS.
THEY'LL HAVE TO WORK HARD TO SWARM ME, AND THEIR OWN NUMBERS WILL WORK AGAINST THEM.
NNGAH!
SSSHUNK
SOMEWHERE IN MY MIND, SOMETHING TELLS ME THIS IS A WASTE OF TIME, THAT **LE FANU** IS THE MORE IMPORTANT QUARRY.
I **IGNORE** IT.
FEEL THE ENVIRONMENT. FLOW AMONG THEM. LISTEN. WATCH.
THERE'S THE SLIGHT CREAK OF UNDEAD MUSCLES **TENSING**.
THE DISPLACED AIR FROM SUPERHUMAN SPEED THAT PRESAGES A LUNGE.
SSSHUNK
IT'S JUST A DANCE.
AND I CAN'T HELP BUT **LOVE** IT.
BUT ONLY WHEN I **LEAD**.
KK-KKRAK

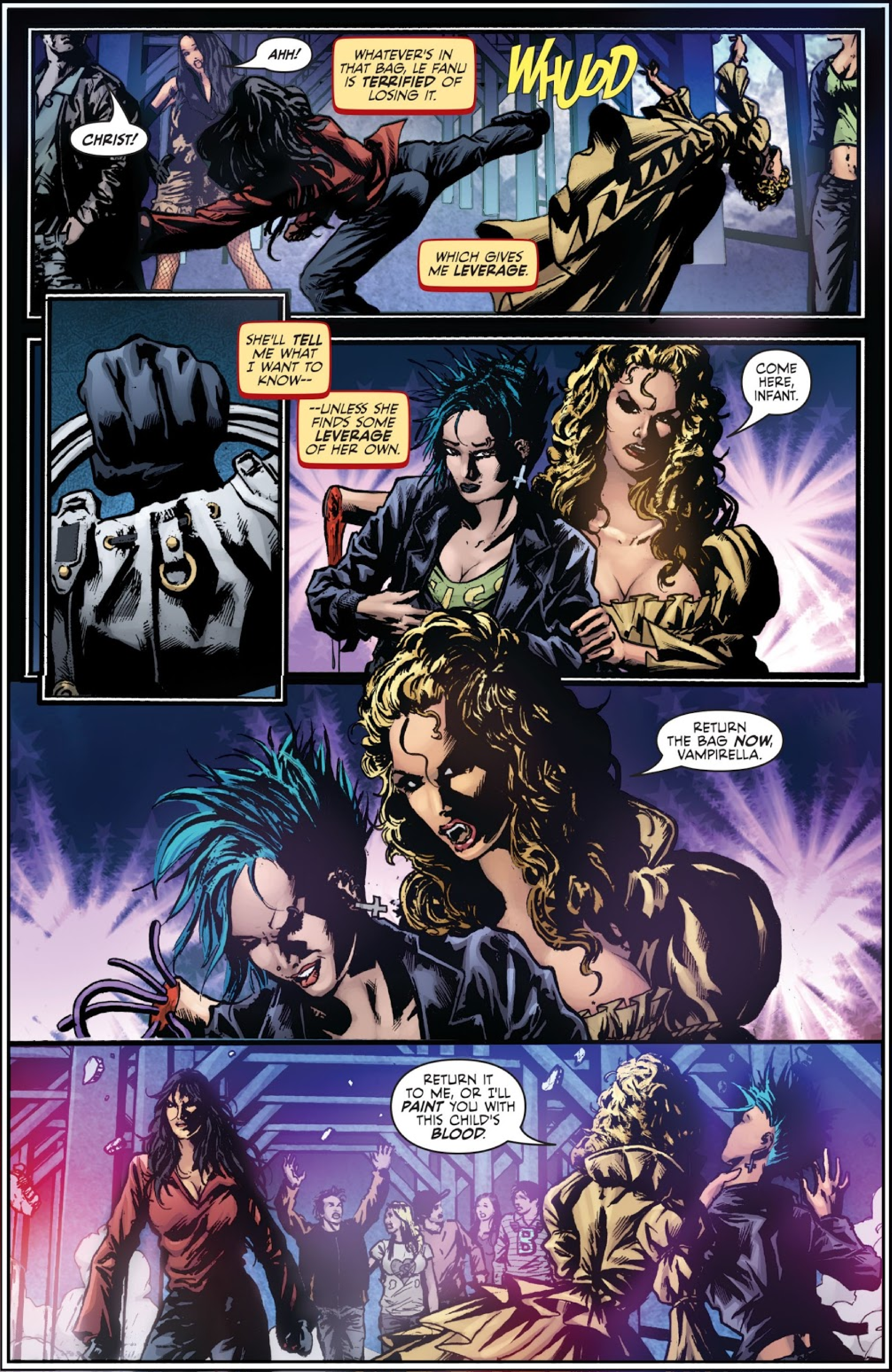

SORRY. TWO LEFT FEET.
SPPPLUCH
NNNYYAAAGH
--CAN'T STOP HER--
THEY'RE BREAKING. CONFUSED. EXPECTING ME TO FIGHT THEM ON THEIR OWN TERMS.
COWARDS! STAND AND FIGHT!
UNPREPARED FOR ME TO BATTLE THEM WITH SOMETHING OTHER THAN TOOTH AND CLAW.
THEY'RE CONFUSED, TERRIFIED.
KKSSH
KKSSH
GOOD.

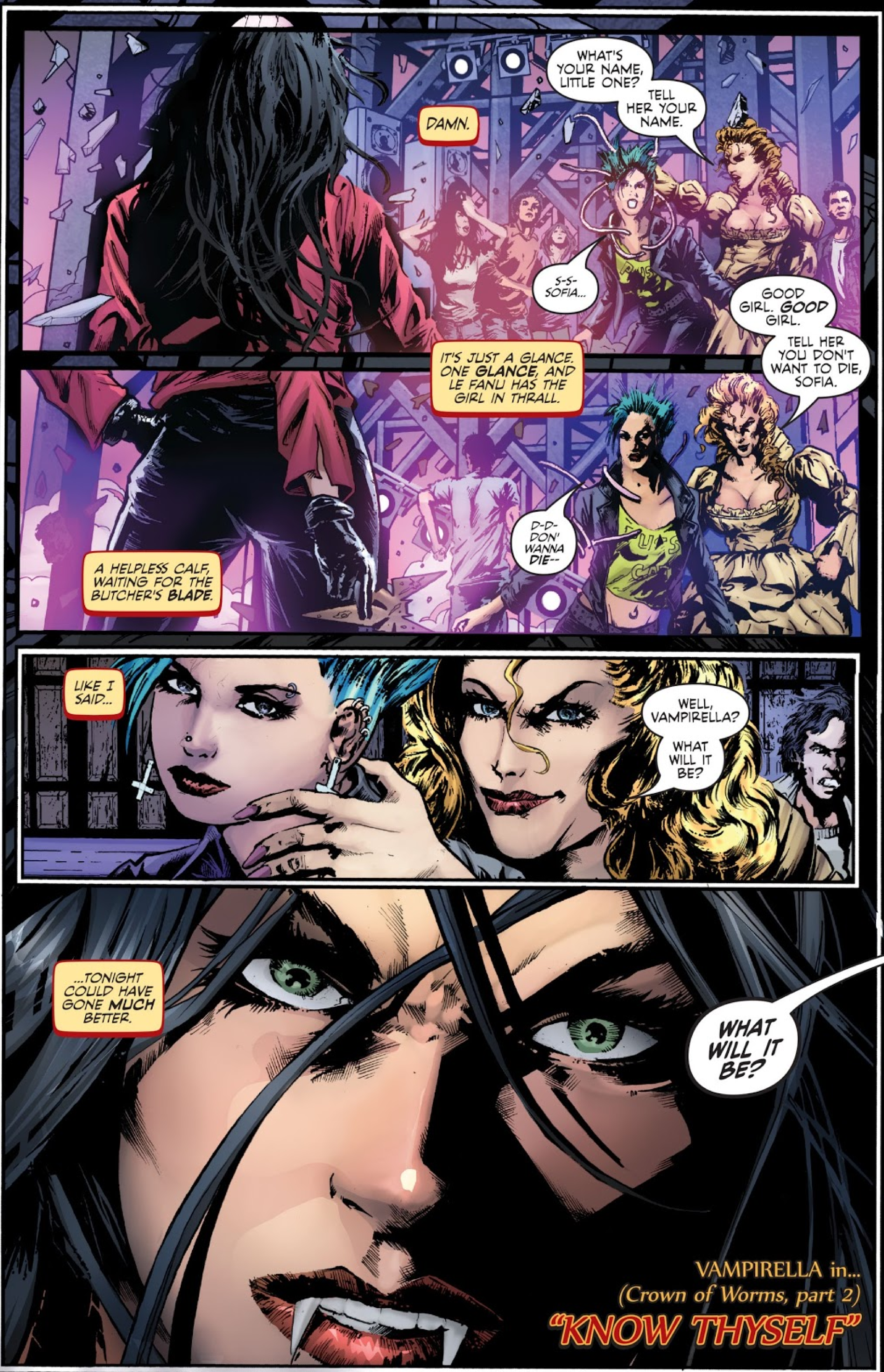

HISSSSSS
AAAGH!
--AAAA!
HISSSSSSSS
THE TINY GLOBES ARE HIGH-IMPACT COMPOSITE.
SSSSSSSS
--BURNS--
UNDER NORMAL CONDITIONS, VERY DIFFCULT TO BREAK.
HISSSSSSSSS
FUMP
EEEEEEEEE
ENHANCED NON-HUMAN STRENGTH, ON THE OTHER HAND, MAKES BREAKING THE GLOBES-- AND RELEASING THE HOLY WATER WITHIN-- CHILD'S PLAY.
KKRUNCH
--KILL YOU, WHORE, RIP YOUR THROAT OUT DRINK YOUR BLOOD SEE YOU SCREAM BEFORE YOU DIE--
FAST.
--TEAR THE FACE OFF YOUR SKULL--
STRONG.
ENRAGED.


KK
KKRAK
THAT MAKES TWO OF US.
--DRAG YOU SCREAMING TO HELL--
AFTER YOU.
--URK
SHHUNK
KRREEEEEK
OH NO.
THERE IS A DOWNSIDE TO SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH.
IT CAN BE TOUGH ON PROPERTY VALUES.
STRUCTURAL DAMAGE IS SEVERE, STONE WALLS GROANING IN PROTEST.
NEED TO FINISH OFF THE NEST, AND GET THE CIVILIANS OUT--
?


THIS... IS NOT OVER.
...THERE WILL BE A RECKONING, VAMPIRELLA. THE MASTER WILL SEE TO IT.
DAMN.
LE FANU BOUNCES BACK FAST. TOO FAST. SIDE EFFECT OF WHATEVER GAVE HER THE TENTACLES, MAYBE?
WHATEVER.
SHNK
LE FANU CAN LEAD ME TO DRACULA, SO LIKE IT OR NOT...
...SHE'S GOING TO GIVE ME ANSWERS.
MUSIC'S POUNDING LIKE A JACKHAMMER.
BETWEEN THE VIBRATIONS FROM THE SOUND SYSTEM, THE DANCING CLUB KIDS AND THE STRUCTURAL DAMAGE...


...THIS BUILDING IS GOING TO COME DOWN AROUND US.
NEED TO END THIS. NOW.
THE CHILDREN IN THE CLUB ARE DAZED, NOT SURE OF WHAT THEY'RE SEEING.
IT'S OVER, WITCH.
--AA!
MESMERIZED BY MUSIC, DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND THE HYPNOTIC POWERS OF THE VAMPIRE NEST THAT FEEDS UPON THEM.
NEED TO GET THIS DONE, BEFORE THEY START TO PANIC--
KKRAK
--WHA-?
NO!
--INTERESTING.

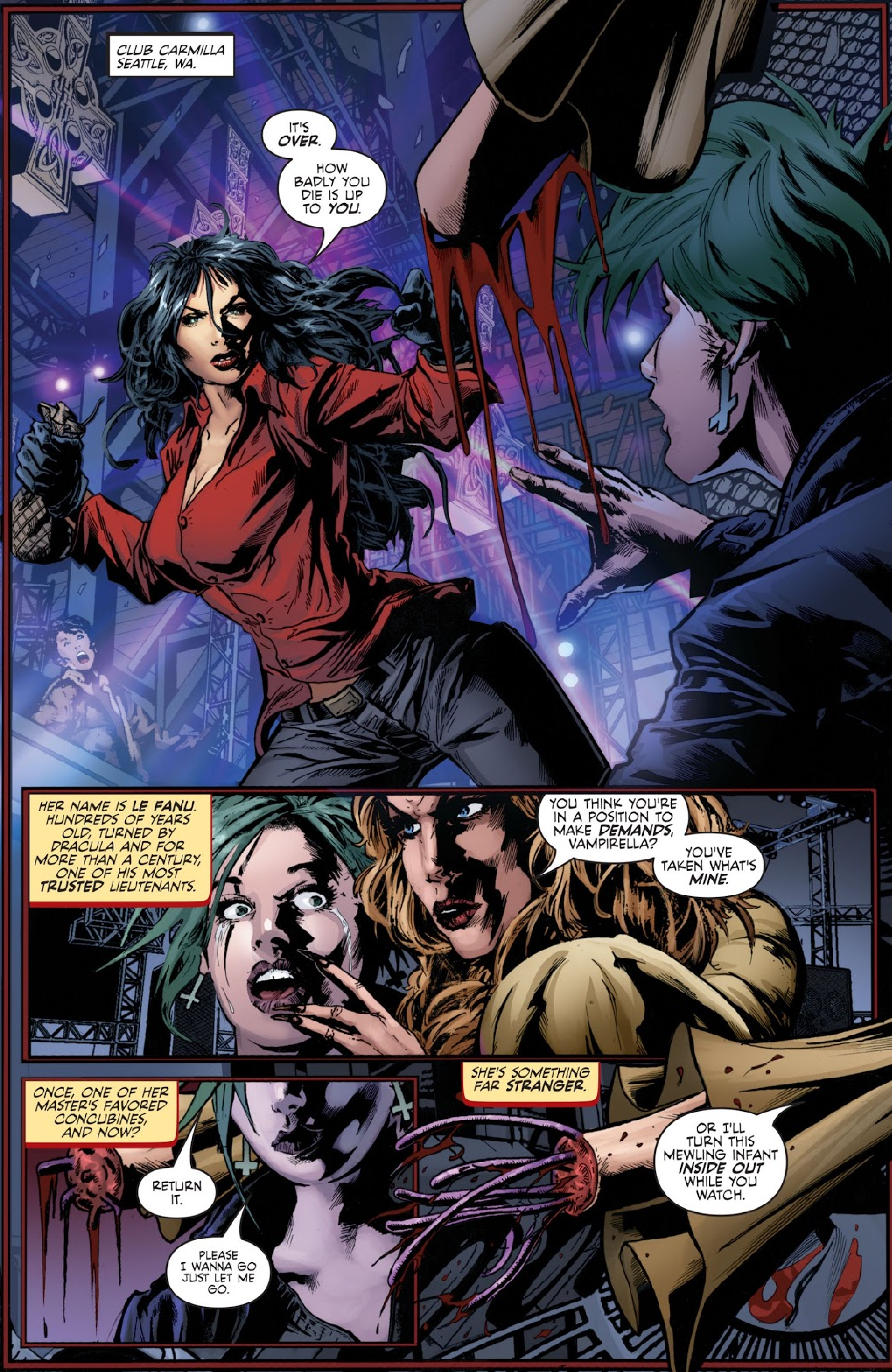

CHRIST!
AHH!
WHATEVER'S IN THAT BAG, LE FANU IS TERRIFIED OF LOSING IT.
WHUDD
WHICH GIVES ME LEVERAGE.
SHE'LL TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW--
--UNLESS SHE FINDS SOME LEVERAGE OF HER OWN.
COME HERE, INFANT.
RETURN THE BAG NOW, VAMPIRELLA.
RETURN IT TO ME, OR I'LL PAINT YOU WITH THIS CHILD'S BLOOD.

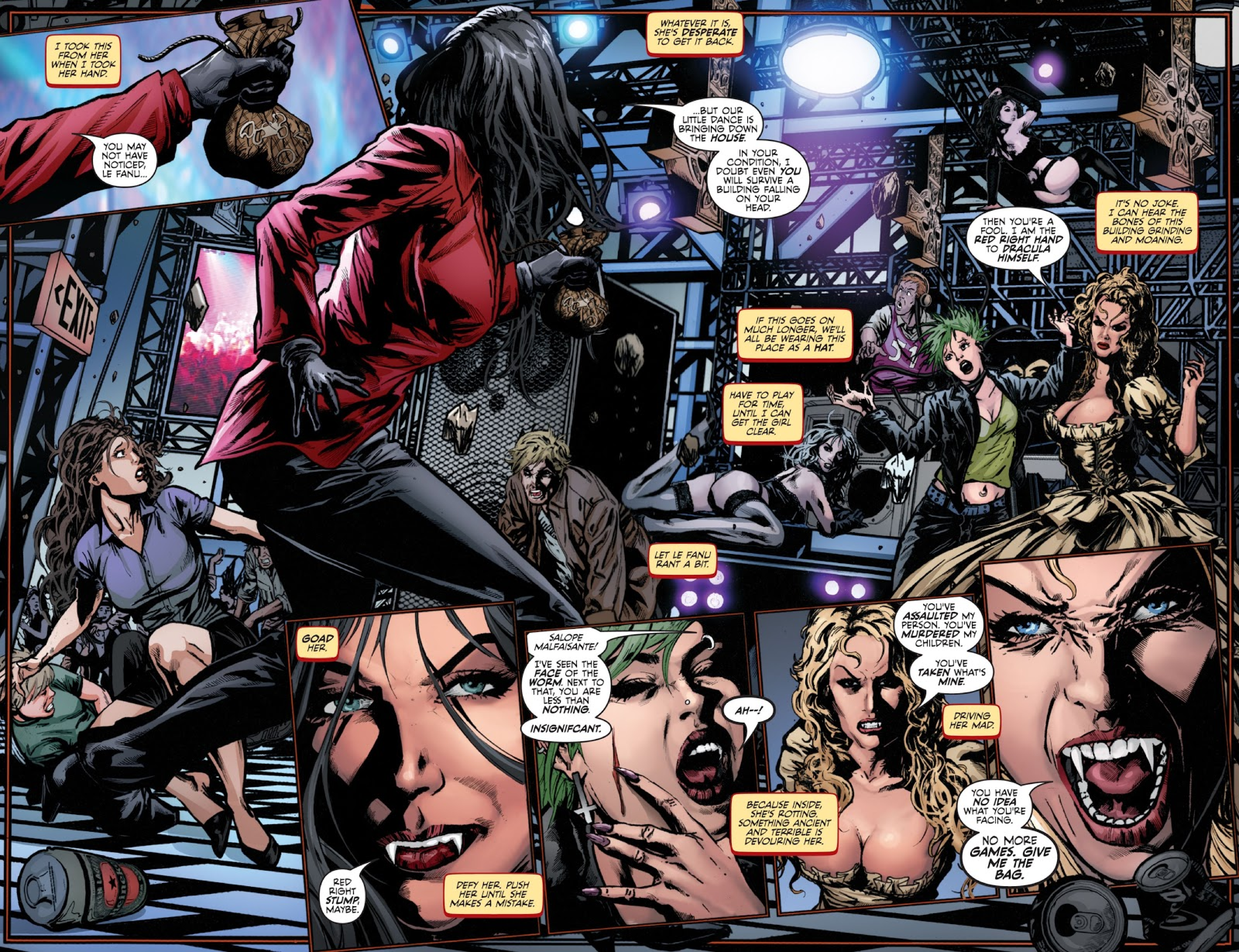

DAMN.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, LITTLE ONE?
TELL HER YOUR NAME.
S-S-SOFIA...
GOOD GIRL. GOOD GIRL.
TELL HER YOU DON'T WANT TO DIE, SOFIA.
IT'S JUST A GLANCE. ONE GLANCE, AND LE FANU HAS THE GIRL IN THRALL.
A HELPLESS CALF, WAITING FOR THE BUTCHER'S BLADE.
D-D-DON' WANNA DIE--
LIKE I SAID...
WELL, VAMPIRELLA?
WHAT WILL IT BE?
...TONIGHT COULD HAVE GONE MUCH BETTER.
WHAT WILL IT BE?

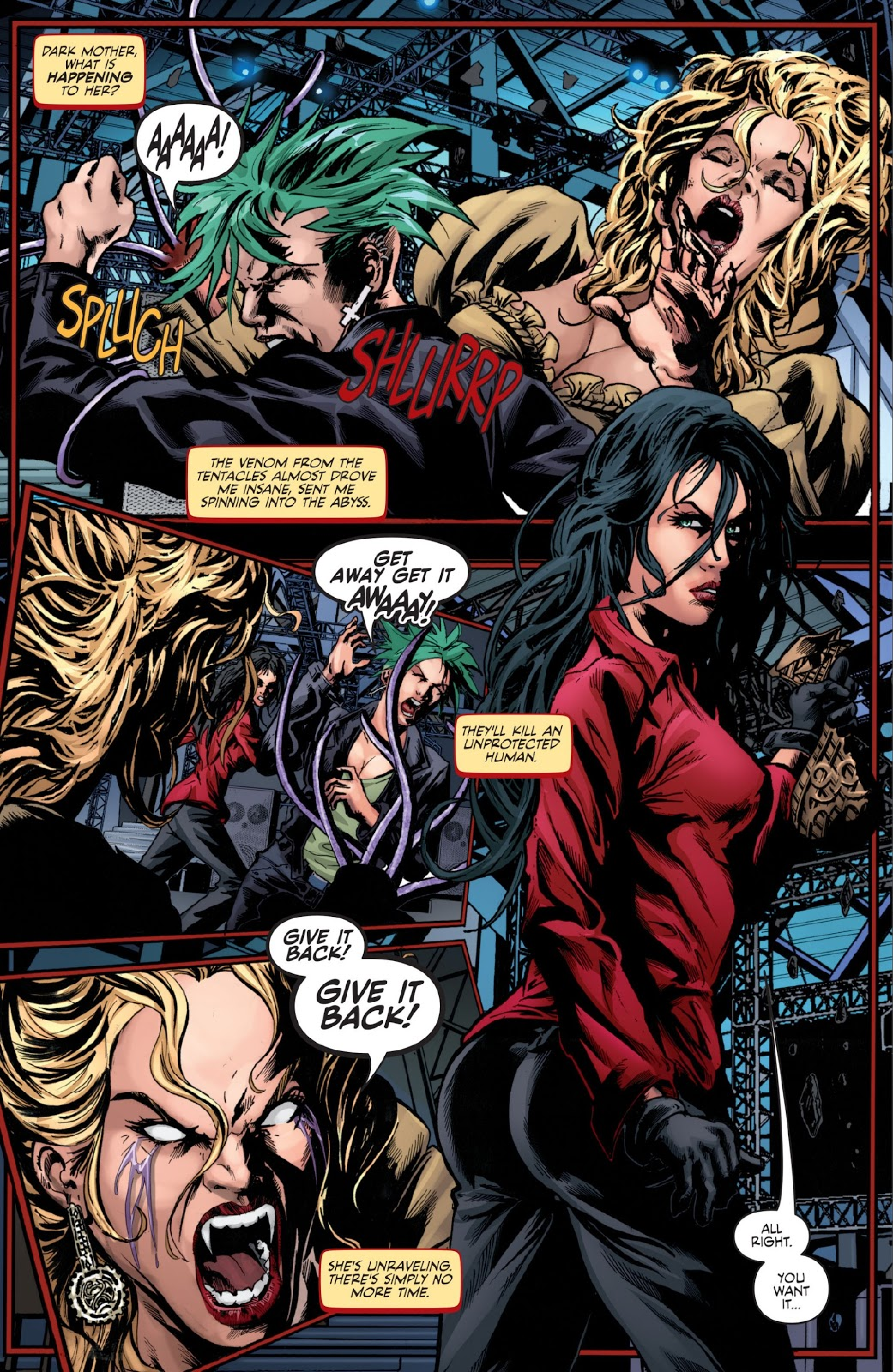
VAMPIRELLA in...
(Crown of Worms, part 2)

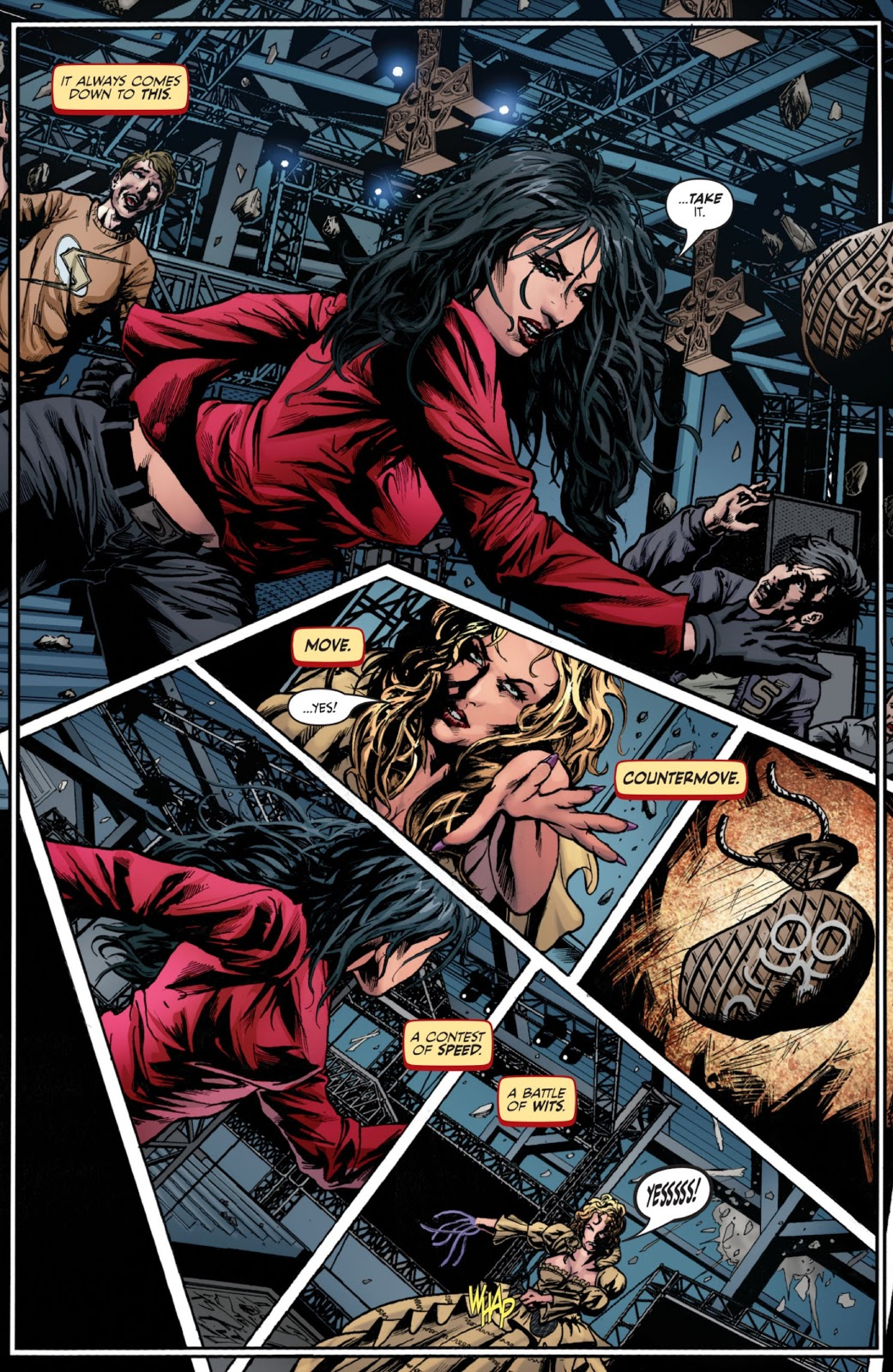
"KNOW THYSELF"

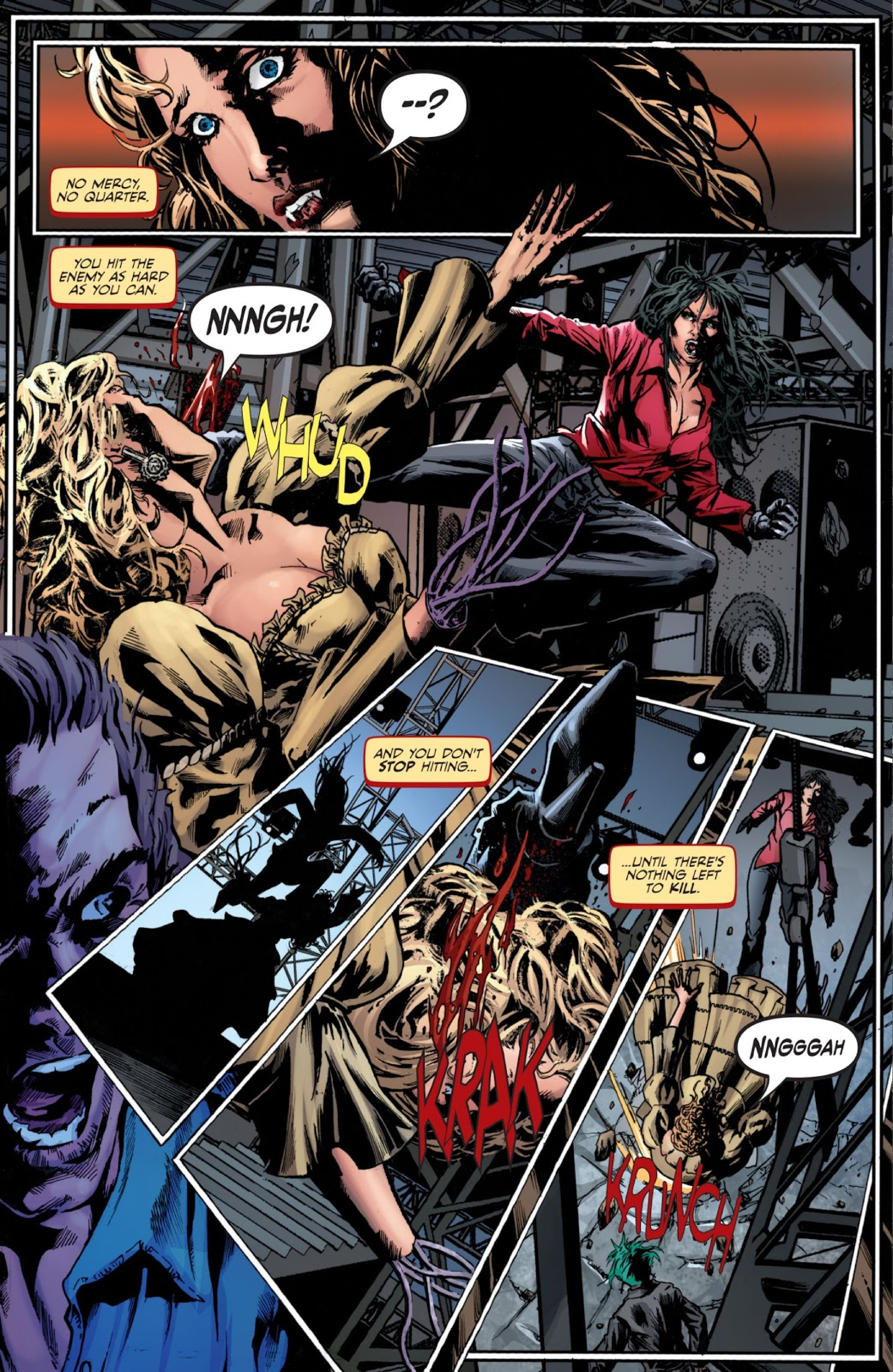
DYNAMITE
3
VAMPIRELLA®

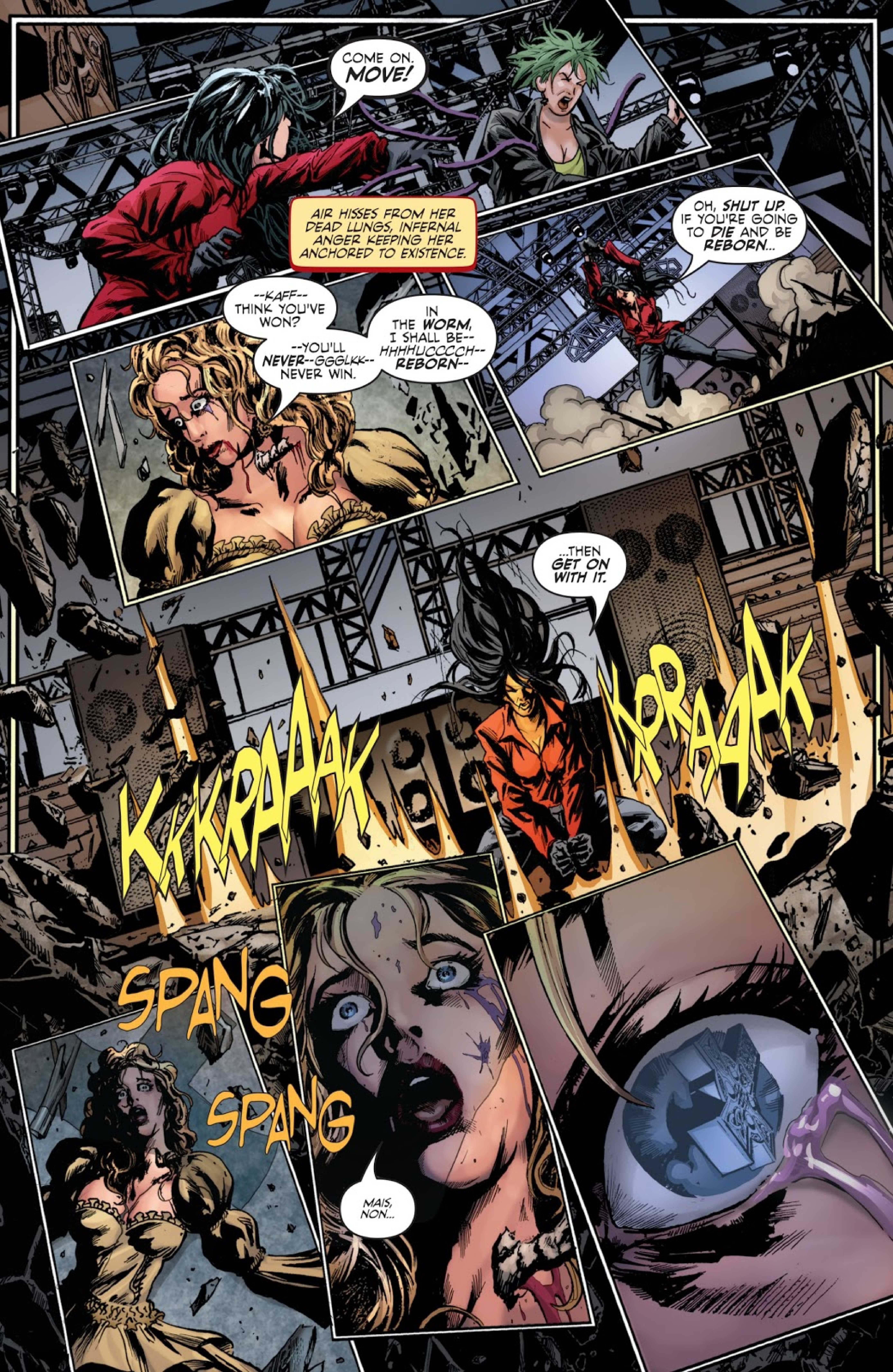

CLUB CARMILLA
SEATTLE, WA.
IT'S *OVER.* HOW BADLY YOU DIE IS UP TO *YOU.*
HER NAME IS **LE FANU.** HUNDREDS OF YEARS OLD, TURNED BY DRACULA AND FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, ONE OF HIS MOST **TRUSTED** LIEUTENANTS.
YOU THINK YOU'RE IN A POSITION TO MAKE *DEMANDS,* VAMPIRELLA?
YOU'VE TAKEN WHAT'S *MINE.*
ONCE, ONE OF HER MASTER'S FAVORED CONCUBINES, AND NOW?
SHE'S SOMETHING FAR **STRANGER.**
RETURN IT.
PLEASE I WANNA GO JUST LET ME GO.
OR I'LL TURN THIS MEWLING INFANT *INSIDE OUT* WHILE YOU WATCH.

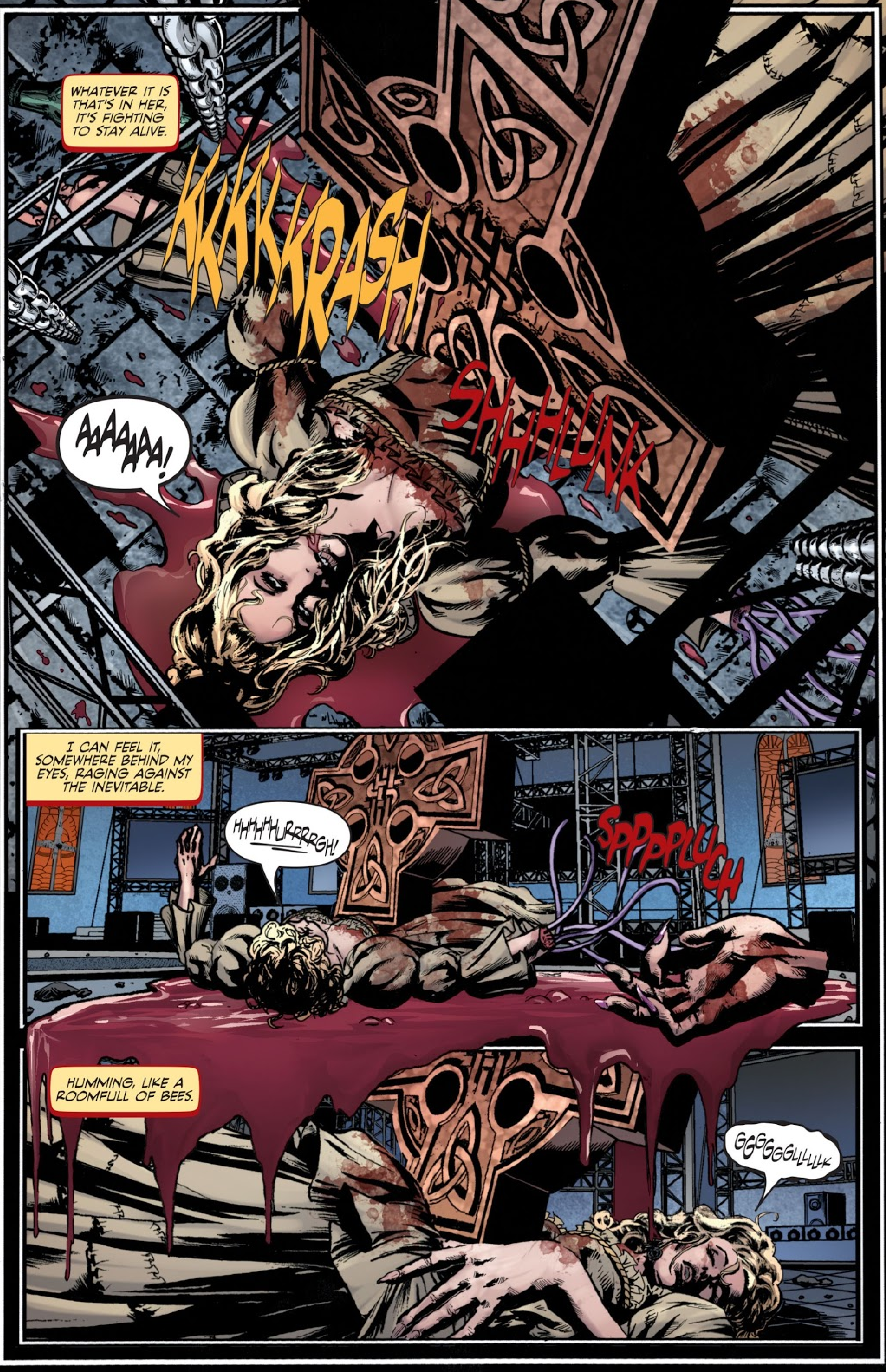

I TOOK THIS FROM HER WHEN I TOOK HER HAND.
YOU MAY NOT HAVE NOTICED, LE FANU...
WHATEVER IT IS, SHE'S **DESPERATE** TO GET IT BACK.
...BUT OUR LITTLE DANCE IS BRINGING DOWN THE ***HOUSE***.
IN YOUR CONDITION, I DOUBT EVEN ***YOU*** WILL SURVIVE A BUILDING FALLING ON YOUR HEAD.
THEN YOU'RE A FOOL. I AM THE ***RED RIGHT HAND*** TO ***DRACULA HIMSELF***.
IT'S NO JOKE. I CAN HEAR THE BONES OF THIS BUILDING GRINDING AND MOANING.
<EXIT>
IF THIS GOES ON MUCH LONGER, WE'LL ALL BE WEARING THIS PLACE AS A **HAT**.
HAVE TO PLAY FOR TIME, UNTIL I CAN GET THE GIRL CLEAR.
LET LE FANU RANT A BIT.
GOAD HER.
RED RIGHT ***STUMP***, MAYBE.
DEFY HER. PUSH HER UNTIL SHE MAKES A MISTAKE.
SALOPE MALFAISANTE!
I'VE SEEN THE ***FACE*** OF THE ***WORM***. NEXT TO THAT, YOU ARE LESS THAN ***NOTHING***.
INSIGNIFCANT.
AH--!
BECAUSE INSIDE, SHE'S ROTTING. SOMETHING ANCIENT AND TERRIBLE IS DEVOURING HER.
YOU'VE ***ASSAULTED*** MY PERSON. YOU'VE ***MURDERED*** MY CHILDREN.
YOU'VE ***TAKEN*** WHAT'S ***MINE***.
DRIVING HER MAD.
YOU HAVE ***NO IDEA*** WHAT YOU'RE FACING.
NO MORE ***GAMES***. ***GIVE ME THE BAG.***

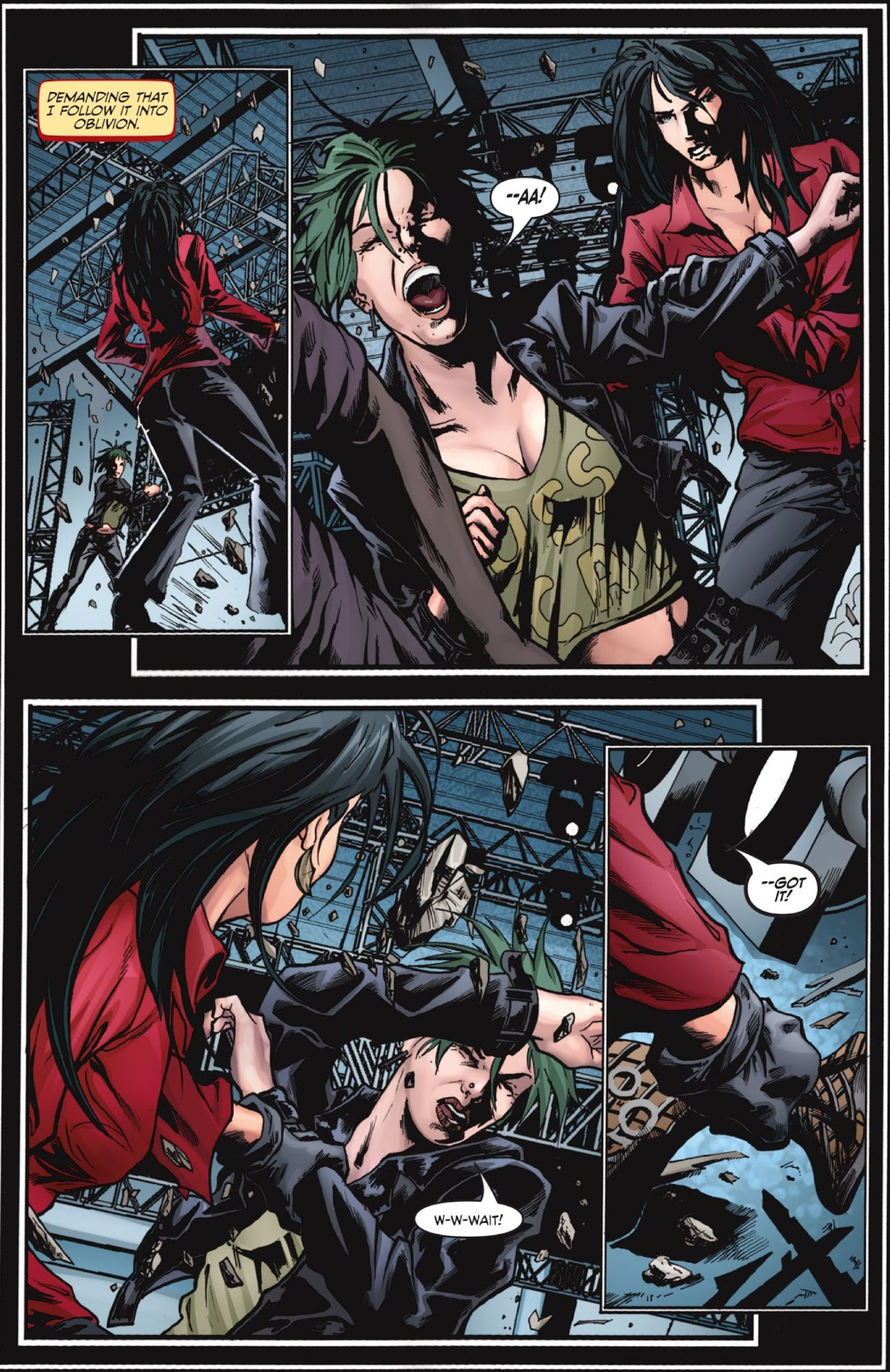

DARK MOTHER, WHAT IS HAPPENING TO HER?
AAAAA!
SPLUCH
SHLURRP
THE VENOM FROM THE TENTACLES ALMOST DROVE ME INSANE, SENT ME SPINNING INTO THE ABYSS.
GET AWAY GET IT AWAAAY!
THEY'LL KILL AN UNPROTECTED HUMAN.
GIVE IT BACK!
GIVE IT BACK!
SHE'S UNRAVELING. THERE'S SIMPLY NO MORE TIME.
ALL RIGHT.
YOU WANT IT...

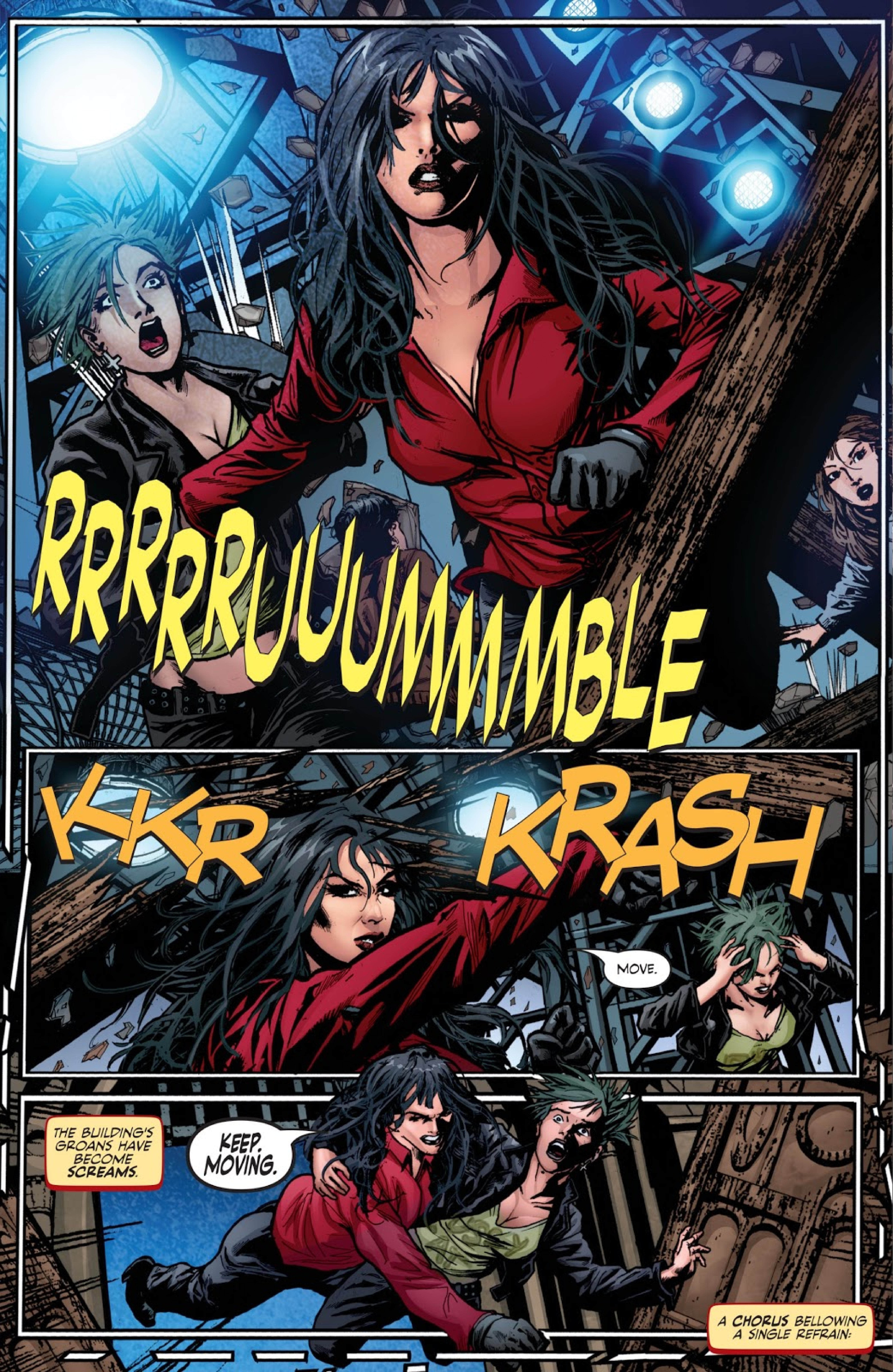

IT ALWAYS COMES DOWN TO THIS.
...TAKE IT.
MOVE.
...YES!
COUNTERMOVE.
A CONTEST OF SPEED.
A BATTLE OF WITS.
YESSSSS!
WHAP

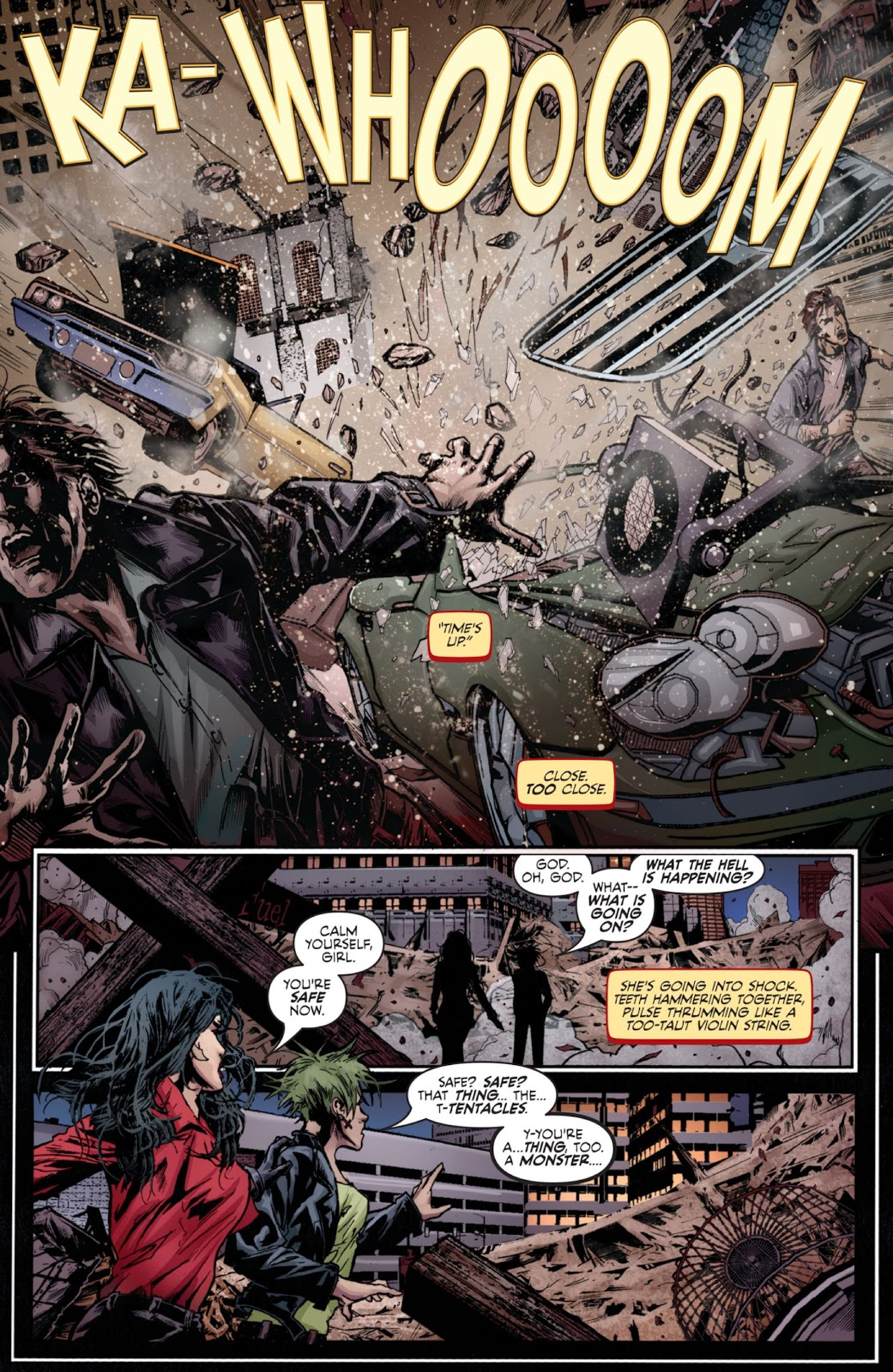

--?
NO MERCY, NO QUARTER.
YOU HIT THE ENEMY AS HARD AS YOU CAN.
NNNGH!
WHUD
AND YOU DON'T **STOP** HITTING...
KRAK
...UNTIL THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO **KILL**.
NNGGGAH
KRUNCH

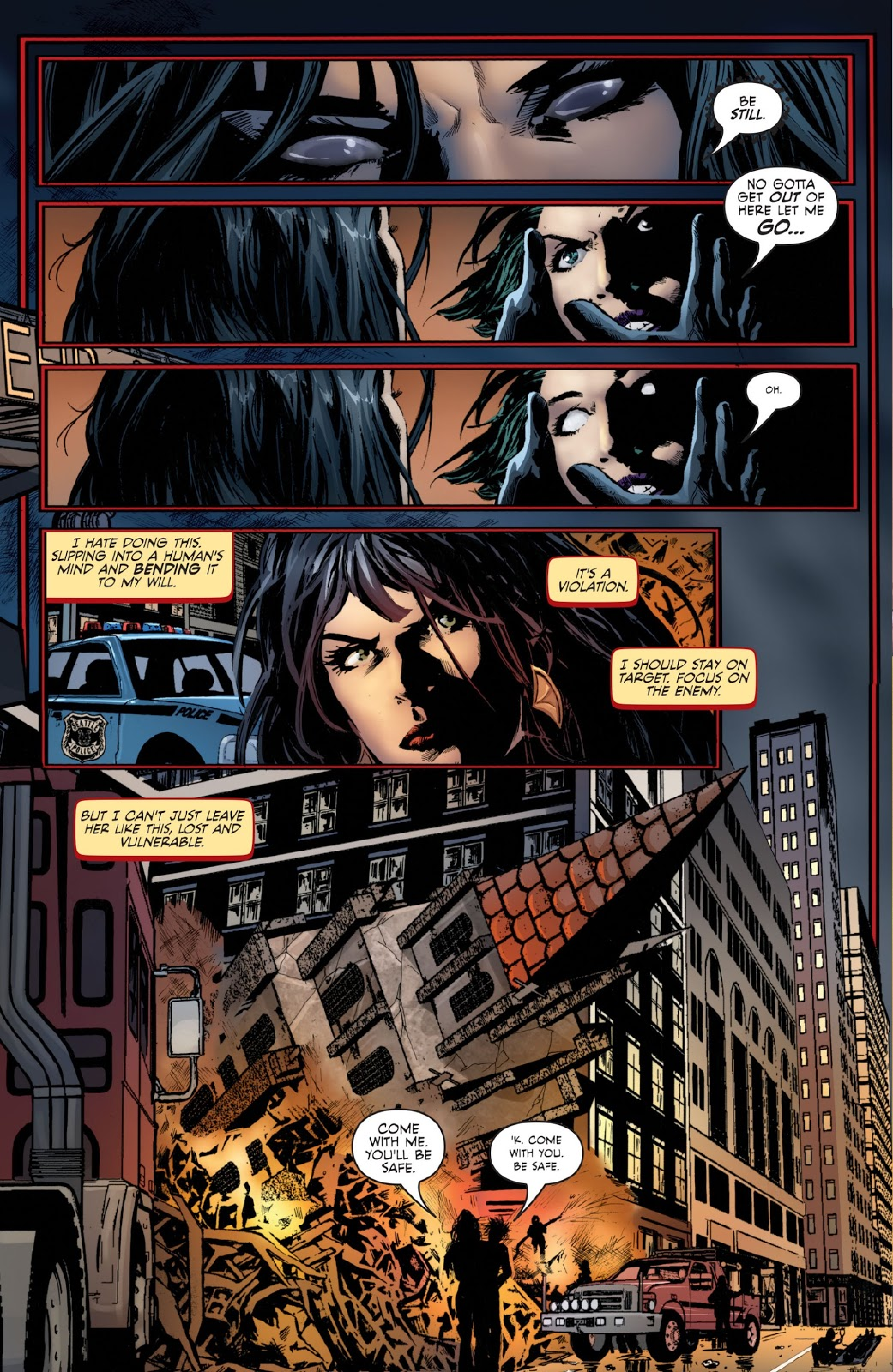

COME ON. *MOVE!*
AIR HISSES FROM HER DEAD LUNGS, INFERNAL ANGER KEEPING HER ANCHORED TO EXISTENCE.
--KAFF-- THINK YOU'VE WON?
--YOU'LL *NEVER*--GGGLKK-- NEVER WIN.
IN THE *WORM,* I SHALL BE-- HHHHUCCCCH-- *REBORN*--
OH, *SHUT UP.* IF YOU'RE GOING TO *DIE* AND BE *REBORN*...
...THEN *GET ON WITH IT.*
KKKRAAAK
KRAAAK
SPANG
SPANG
MAIS, NON...

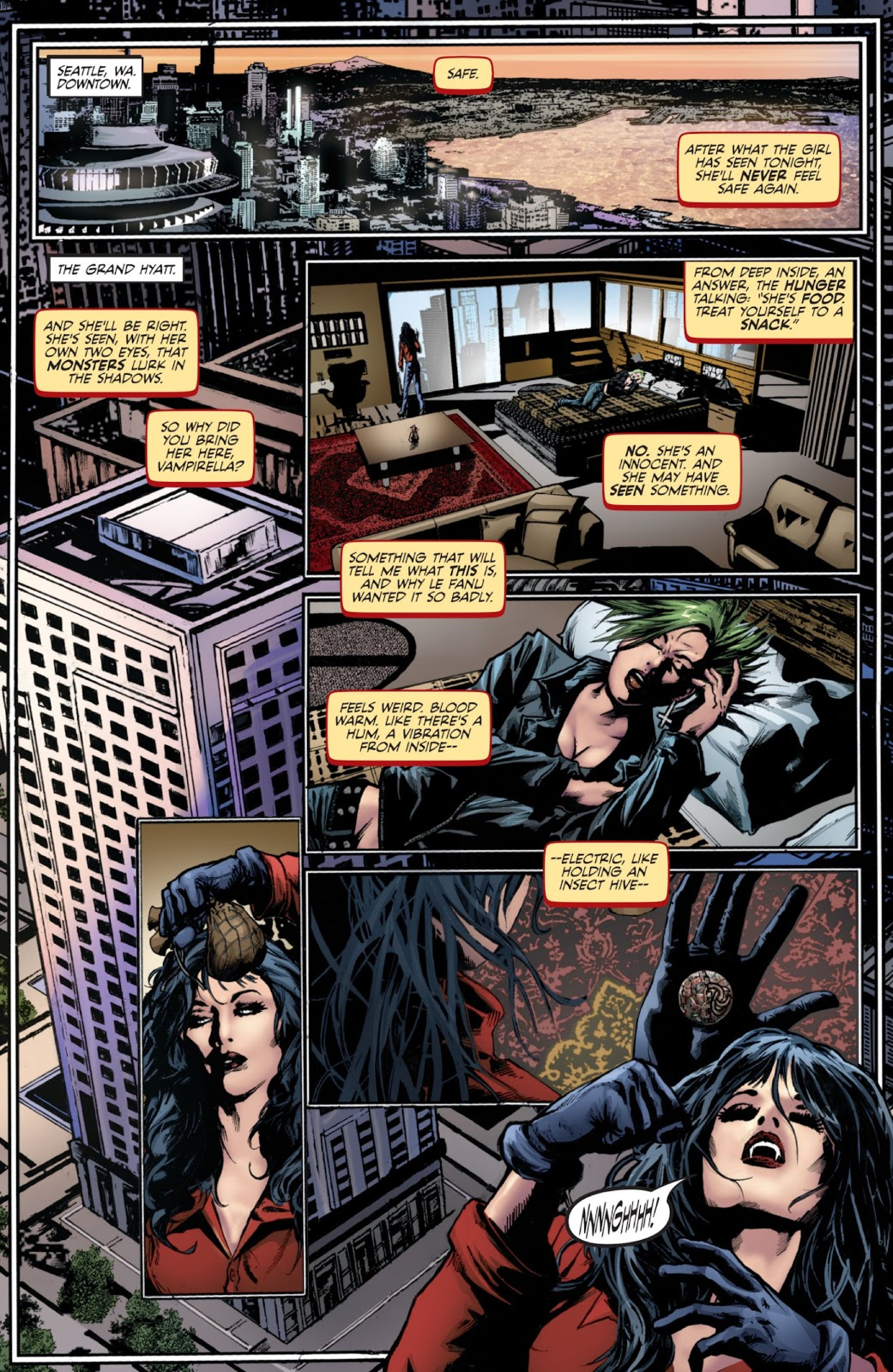

WHATEVER IT IS THAT'S IN HER, IT'S FIGHTING TO STAY ALIVE.
KKKKKRASH
SHHHLUNK
AAAAAAA!
I CAN FEEL IT, SOMEWHERE BEHIND MY EYES, RAGING AGAINST THE INEVITABLE.
HHHHHURRRRGH!
SPPPPLUCH
HUMMING, LIKE A ROOMFULL OF BEES.
GGGGGGLLLLLK

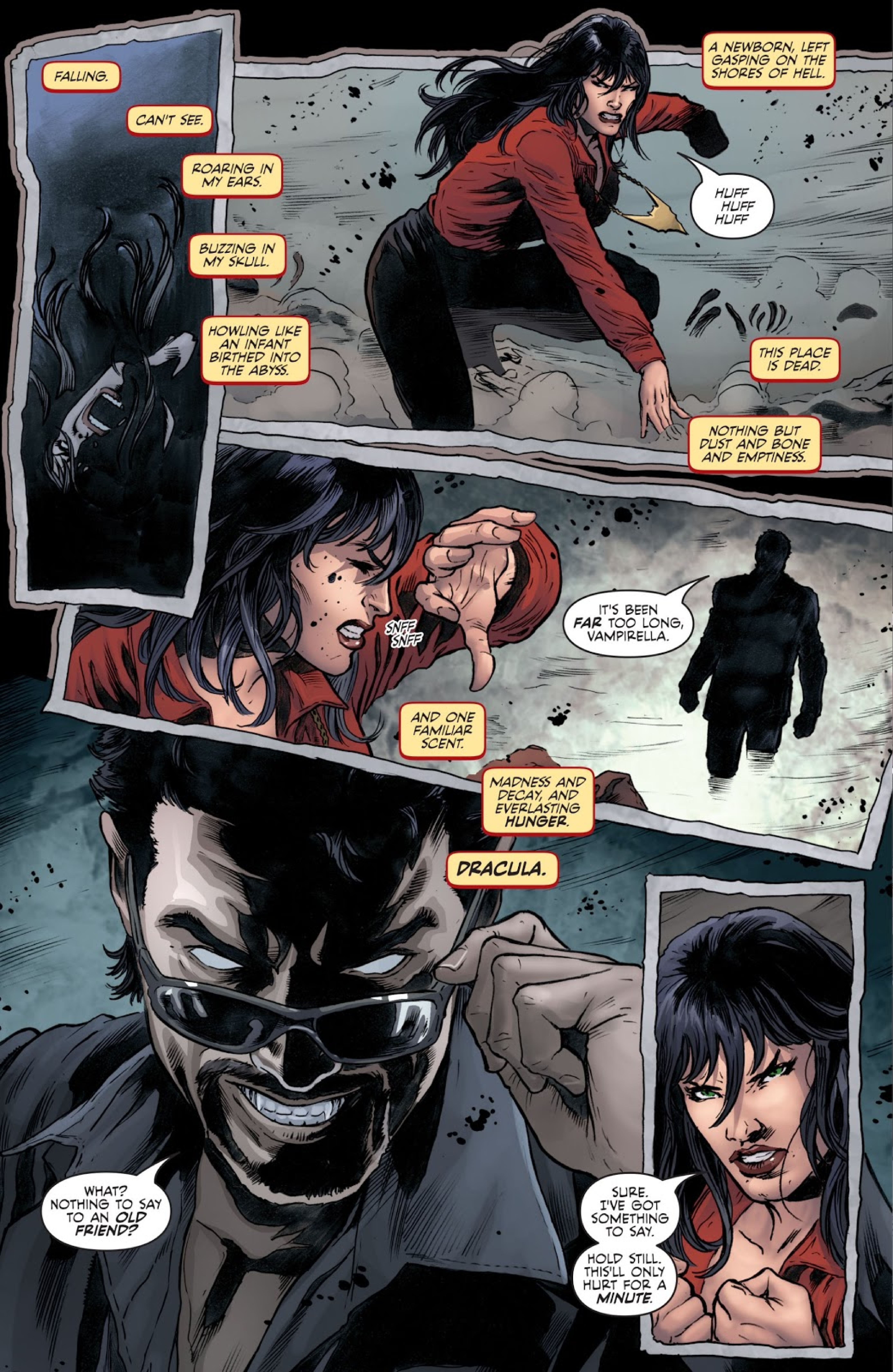

DEMANDING THAT I FOLLOW IT INTO OBLIVION.
--AA!
W-W-WAIT!
--GOT IT!

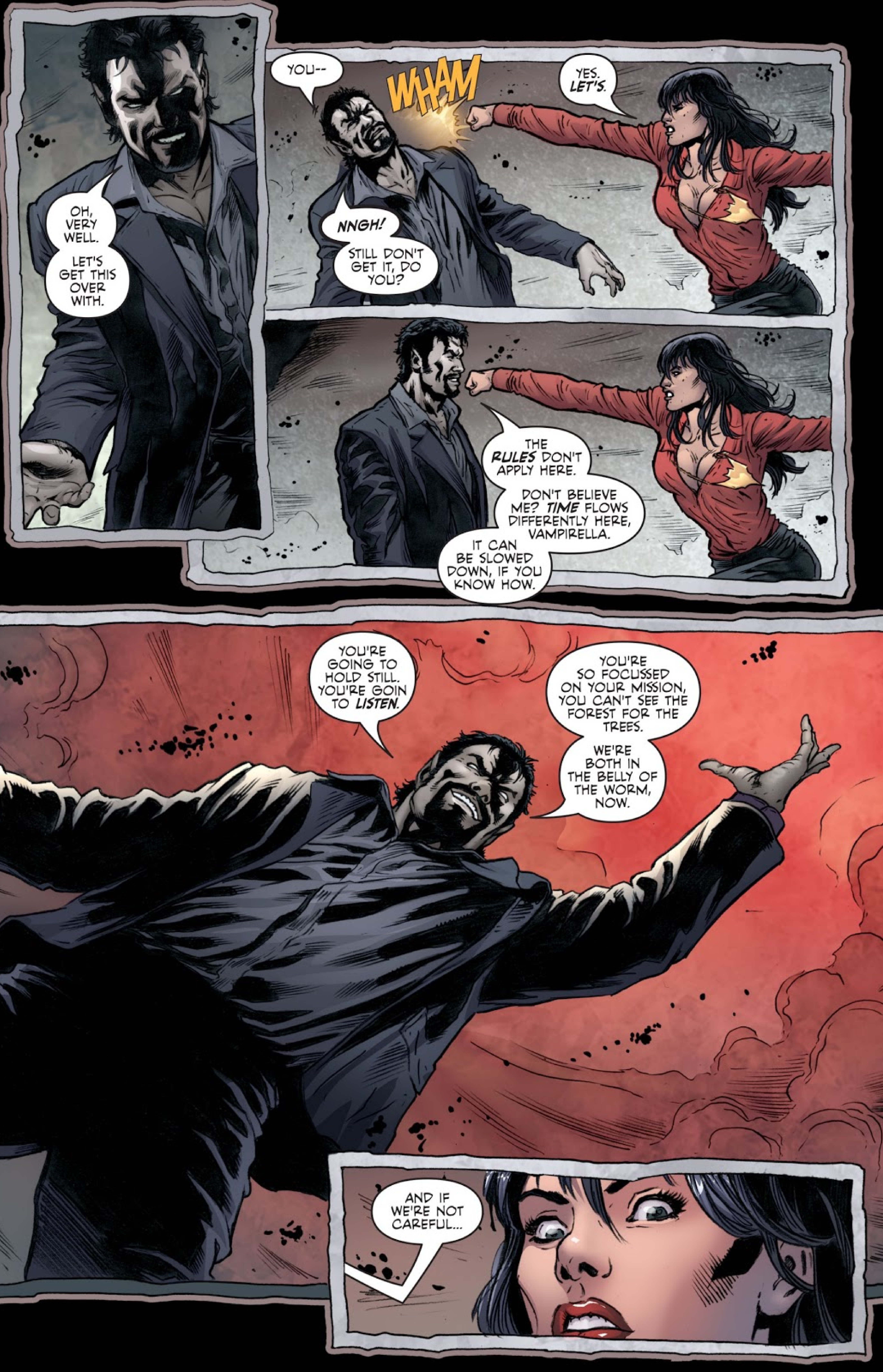

RRRRUUUMMMBLE
KKR KRASH
MOVE.
THE BUILDING'S GROANS HAVE BECOME SCREAMS.
KEEP. MOVING.
A CHORUS BELLOWING A SINGLE REFRAIN:

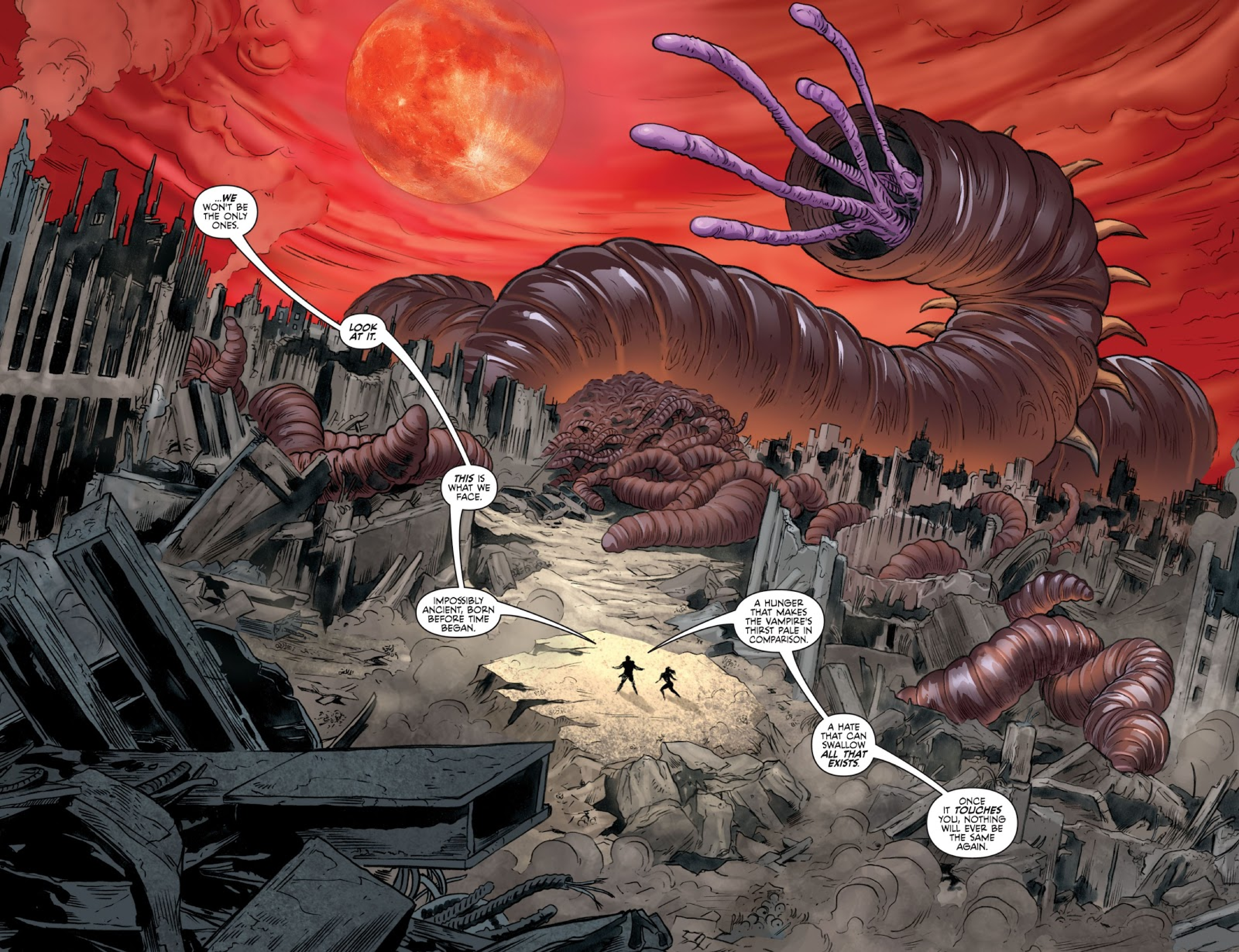

KA-WHOOOOM
"TIME'S UP."
CLOSE. **TOO** CLOSE.
GOD. OH, GOD.
WHAT THE HELL IS HAPPENING?
WHAT-- **WHAT IS GOING ON?**
fuel
CALM YOURSELF, GIRL.
YOU'RE **SAFE** NOW.
SHE'S GOING INTO SHOCK. TEETH HAMMERING TOGETHER, PULSE THRUMMING LIKE A TOO-TAUT VIOLIN STRING.
SAFE? **SAFE?** THAT **THING**... THE... T-**TENTACLES**.
Y-YOU'RE A...**THING**, TOO. A **MONSTER**....

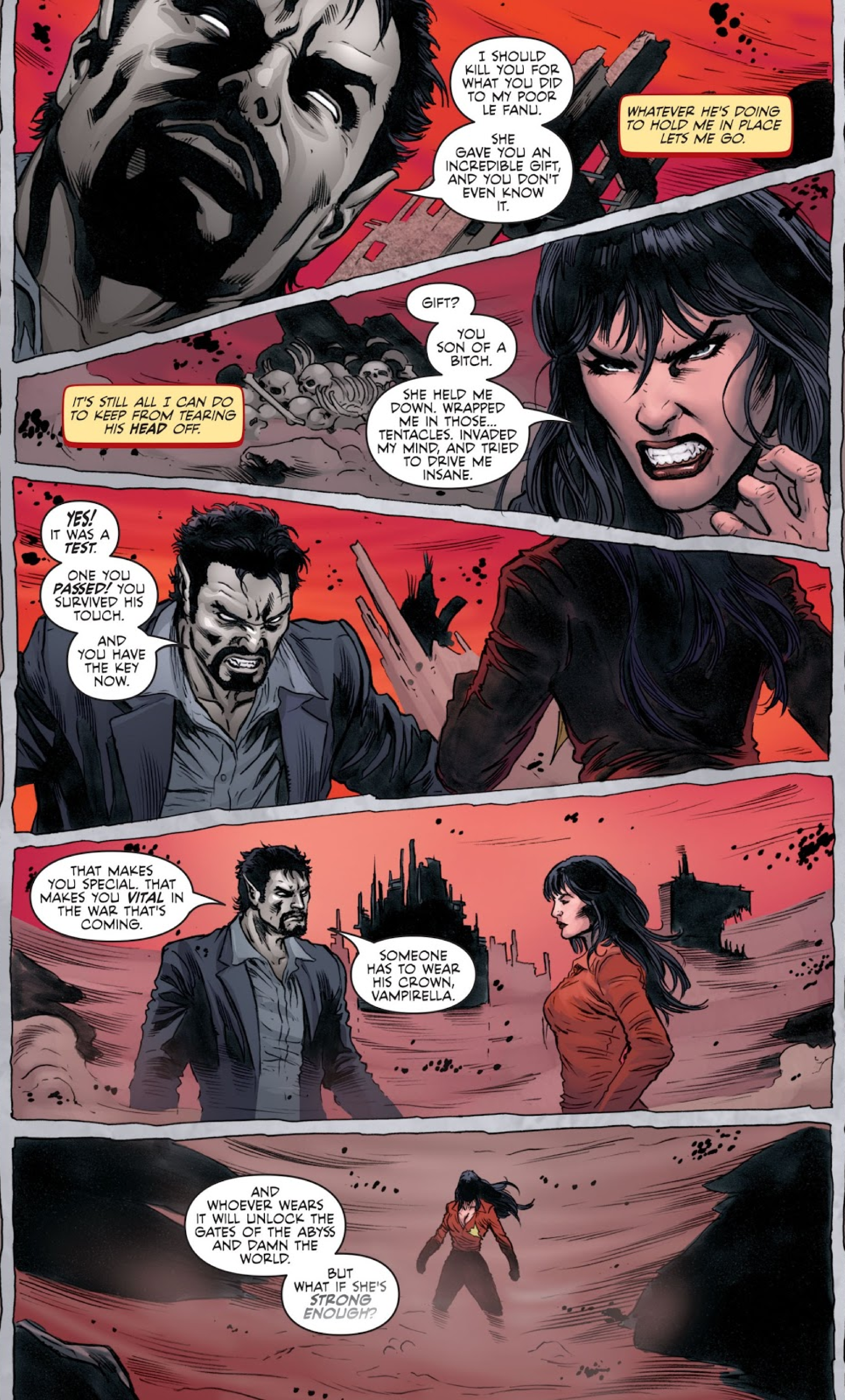

BE *STILL*.
NO GOTTA GET *OUT* OF HERE LET ME ***GO...***
OH.
I HATE DOING THIS. SLIPPING INTO A HUMAN'S MIND AND **BENDING** IT TO MY WILL.
IT'S A VIOLATION.
POLICE
SEATTLE POLICE
I SHOULD STAY ON TARGET. FOCUS ON THE ENEMY.
BUT I CAN'T JUST LEAVE HER LIKE THIS, LOST AND VULNERABLE.
COME WITH ME. YOU'LL BE SAFE.
'K. COME WITH YOU. BE SAFE.

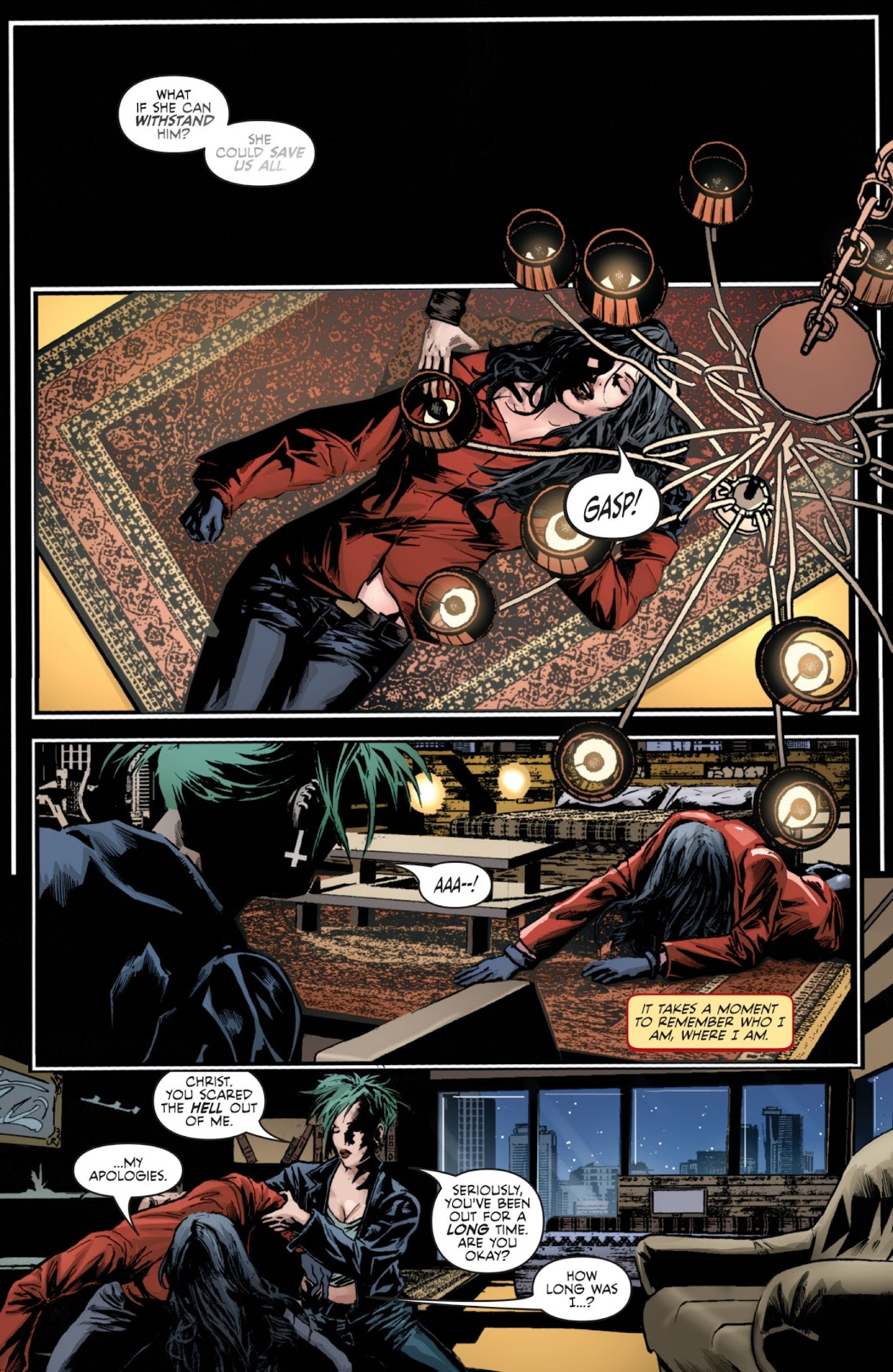

SEATTLE, WA. DOWNTOWN.
SAFE.
AFTER WHAT THE GIRL HAS SEEN TONIGHT, SHE'LL NEVER FEEL SAFE AGAIN.
THE GRAND HYATT.
AND SHE'LL BE RIGHT. SHE'S SEEN, WITH HER OWN TWO EYES, THAT MONSTERS LURK IN THE SHADOWS.
SO WHY DID YOU BRING HER HERE, VAMPIRELLA?
FROM DEEP INSIDE, AN ANSWER, THE HUNGER TALKING: "SHE'S FOOD. TREAT YOURSELF TO A SNACK."
NO. SHE'S AN INNOCENT. AND SHE MAY HAVE SEEN SOMETHING.
SOMETHING THAT WILL TELL ME WHAT THIS IS, AND WHY LE FANU WANTED IT SO BADLY.
FEELS WEIRD. BLOOD WARM. LIKE THERE'S A HUM, A VIBRATION FROM INSIDE--
--ELECTRIC, LIKE HOLDING AN INSECT HIVE--
NNNNGHHHH!

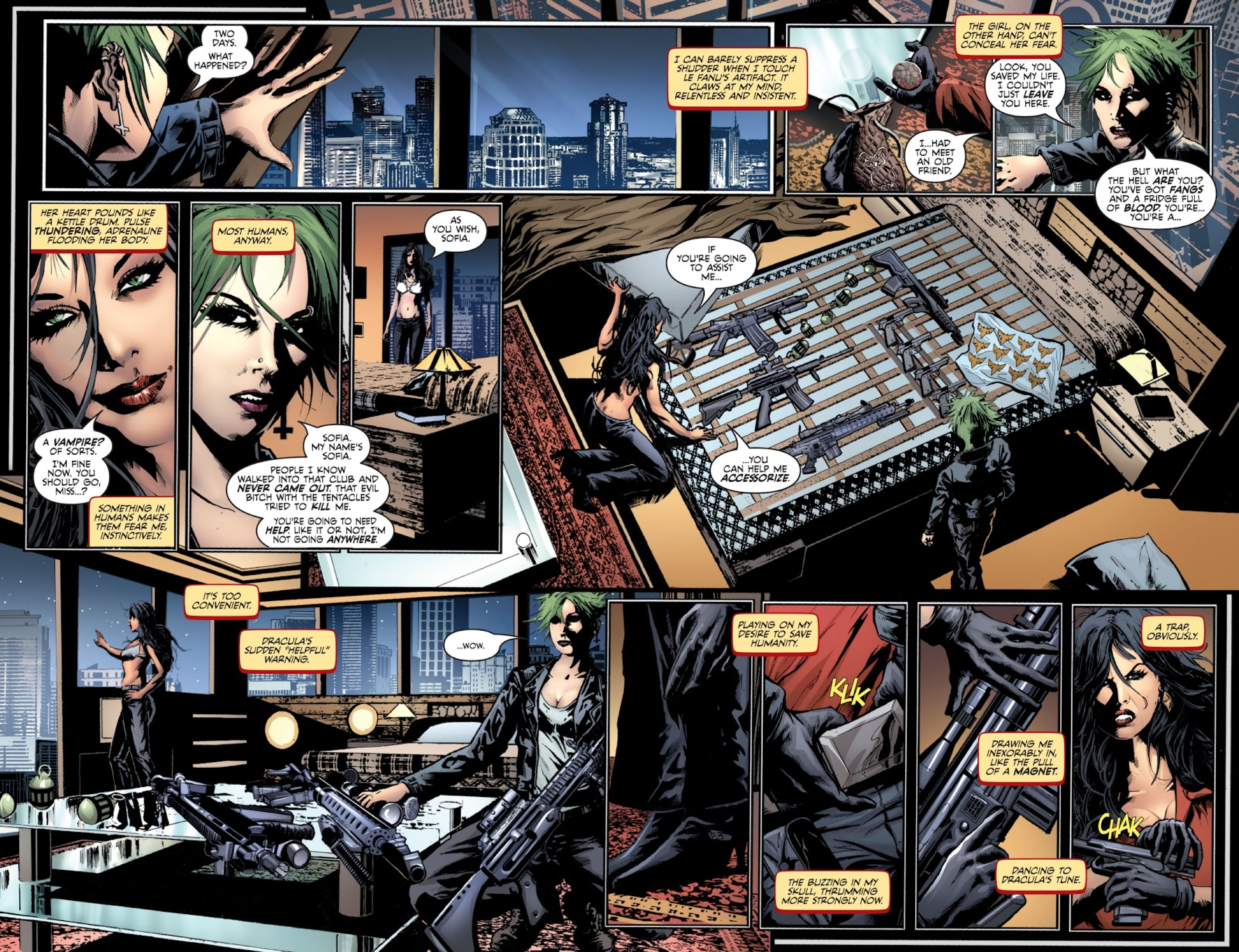

FALLING.
CAN'T SEE.
ROARING IN MY EARS.
BUZZING IN MY SKULL.
HOWLING LIKE AN INFANT BIRTHED INTO THE ABYSS.
A NEWBORN, LEFT GASPING ON THE SHORES OF HELL.
HUFF HUFF HUFF
THIS PLACE IS DEAD.
NOTHING BUT DUST AND BONE AND EMPTINESS.
SNFF SNFF
IT'S BEEN *FAR* TOO LONG, VAMPIRELLA.
AND ONE FAMILIAR SCENT.
MADNESS AND DECAY, AND EVERLASTING *HUNGER*.
DRACULA.
WHAT? NOTHING TO SAY TO AN *OLD FRIEND?*
SURE. I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY.
HOLD STILL. THIS'LL ONLY HURT FOR A *MINUTE*.

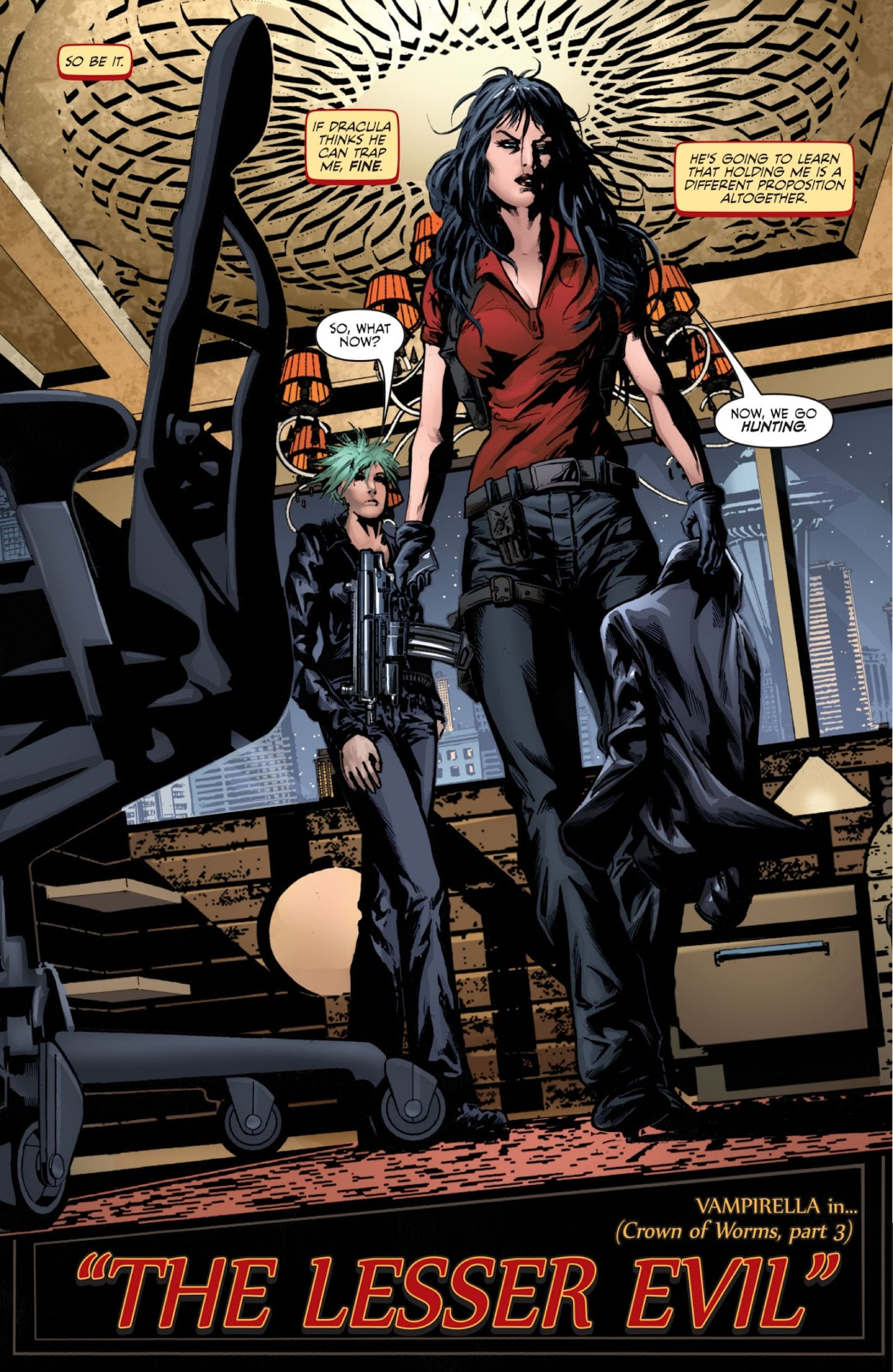

OH, VERY WELL.
LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.
YOU--
WHAM
YES. *LET'S.*
NNGH!
STILL DON'T GET IT, DO YOU?
THE *RULES* DON'T APPLY HERE.
DON'T BELIEVE ME? *TIME* FLOWS DIFFERENTLY HERE, VAMPIRELLA.
IT CAN BE SLOWED DOWN, IF YOU KNOW HOW.
YOU'RE GOING TO HOLD STILL. YOU'RE GOIN TO *LISTEN.*
YOU'RE SO FOCUSSED ON YOUR MISSION, YOU CAN'T SEE THE FOREST FOR THE TREES.
WE'RE BOTH IN THE BELLY OF THE WORM, NOW.
AND IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL...


...WE WON'T BE THE ONLY ONES.
LOOK AT IT.
THIS IS WHAT WE FACE.
IMPOSSIBLY ANCIENT, BORN BEFORE TIME BEGAN.
A HUNGER THAT MAKES THE VAMPIRE'S THIRST PALE IN COMPARISON.
A HATE THAT CAN SWALLOW ALL THAT EXISTS.
ONCE IT TOUCHES YOU, NOTHING WILL EVER BE THE SAME AGAIN.

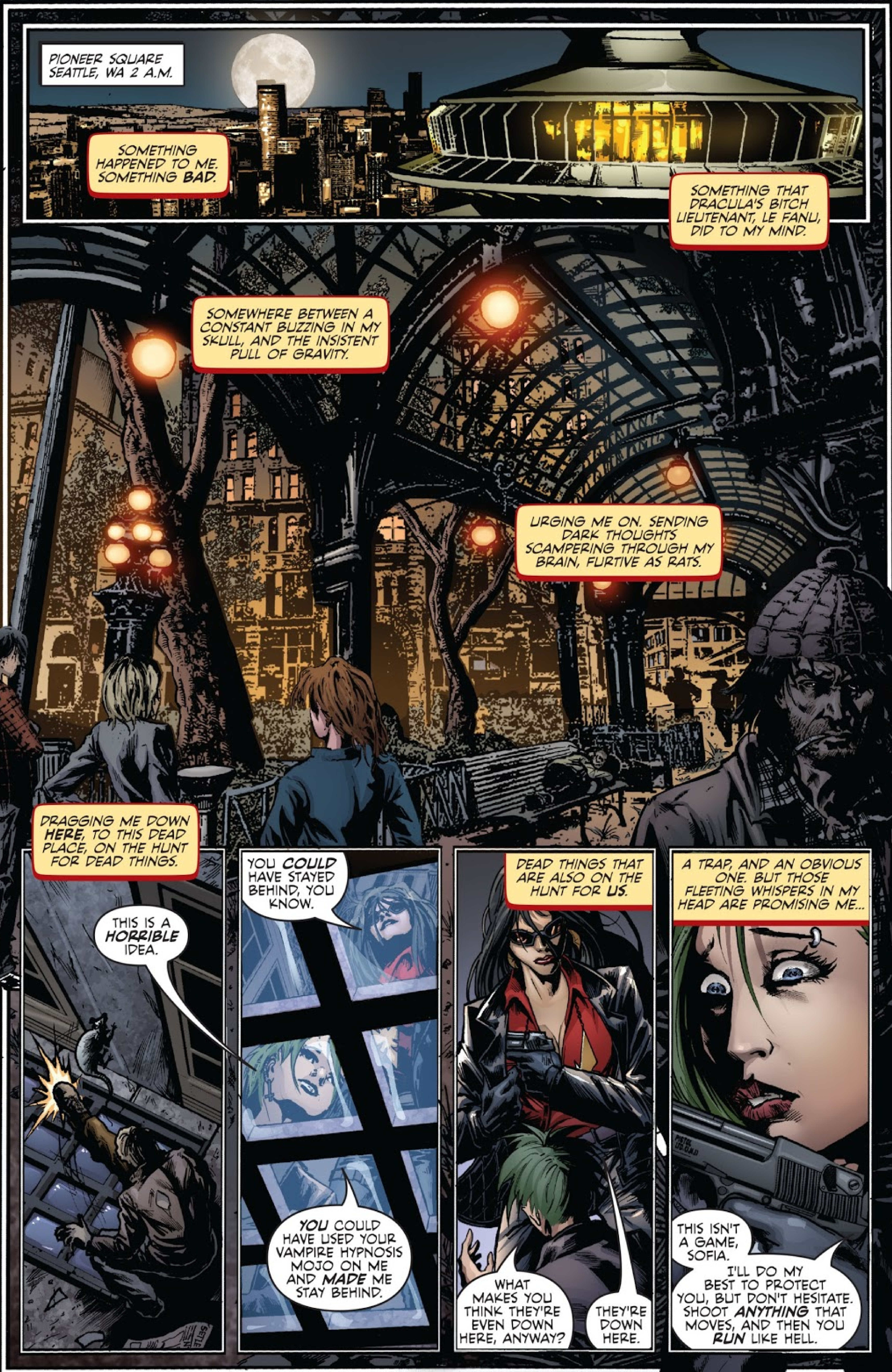

I SHOULD KILL YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID TO MY POOR LE FANU.
SHE GAVE YOU AN INCREDIBLE GIFT, AND YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW IT.
WHATEVER HE'S DOING TO HOLD ME IN PLACE LETS ME GO.
GIFT?
YOU SON OF A BITCH.
SHE HELD ME DOWN. WRAPPED ME IN THOSE... TENTACLES. INVADED MY MIND, AND TRIED TO DRIVE ME INSANE.
IT'S STILL ALL I CAN DO TO KEEP FROM TEARING HIS HEAD OFF.
YES! IT WAS A TEST.
ONE YOU PASSED! YOU SURVIVED HIS TOUCH.
AND YOU HAVE THE KEY NOW.
THAT MAKES YOU SPECIAL. THAT MAKES YOU VITAL IN THE WAR THAT'S COMING.
SOMEONE HAS TO WEAR HIS CROWN, VAMPIRELLA.
AND WHOEVER WEARS IT WILL UNLOCK THE GATES OF THE ABYSS AND DAMN THE WORLD.
BUT WHAT IF SHE'S STRONG ENOUGH?

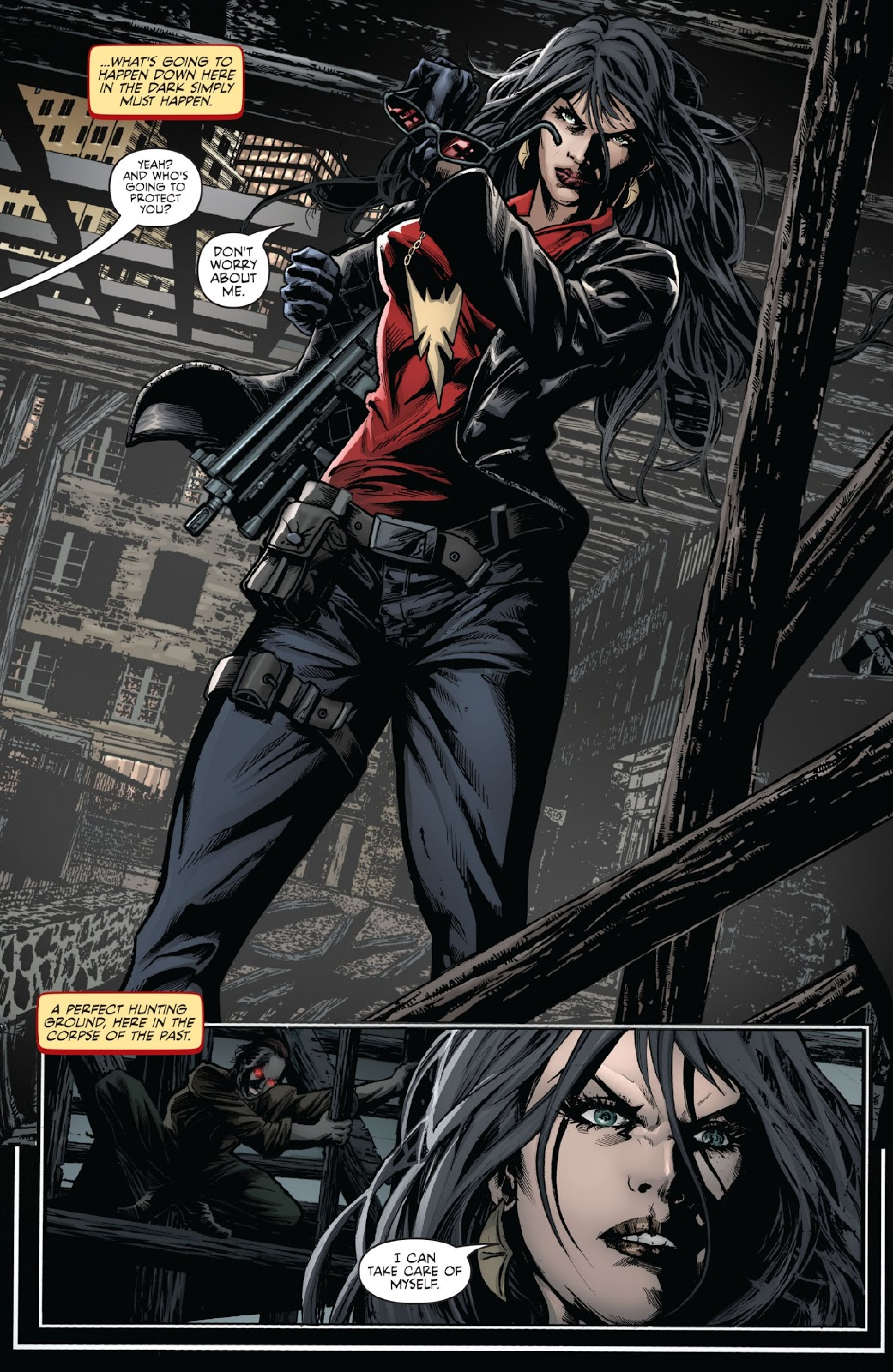

WHAT IF SHE CAN *WITHSTAND* HIM?
SHE COULD *SAVE US ALL*.
GASP!
AAA--!
IT TAKES A MOMENT TO REMEMBER WHO I AM, WHERE I AM.
CHRIST. YOU SCARED THE *HELL* OUT OF ME.
...MY APOLOGIES.
SERIOUSLY, YOU'VE BEEN OUT FOR A *LONG* TIME. ARE YOU OKAY?
HOW LONG WAS I...?

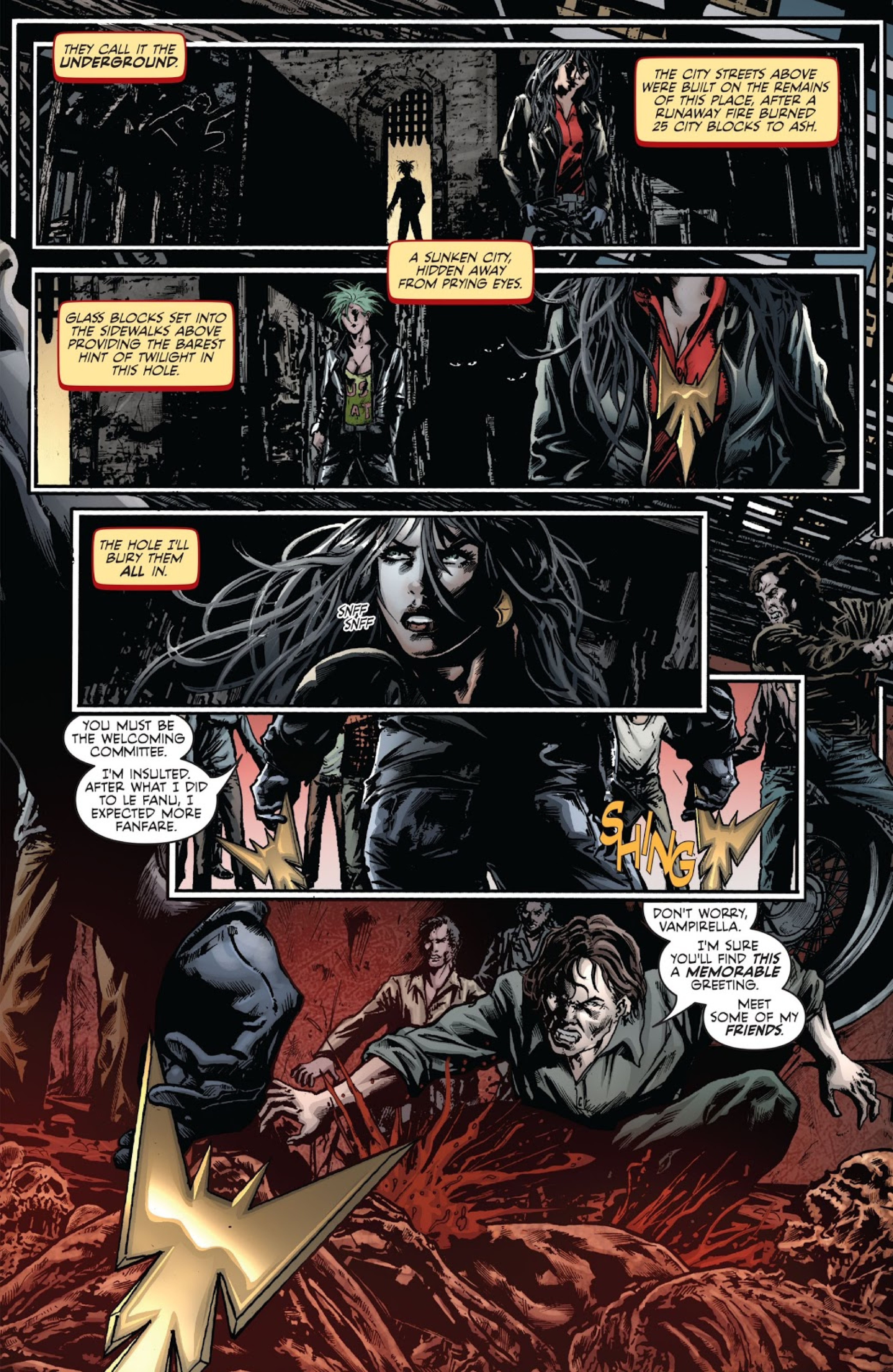

TWO DAYS. WHAT HAPPENED?
I CAN BARELY SUPPRESS A SHUDDER WHEN I TOUCH LE FANU'S ARTIFACT. IT CLAWS AT MY MIND, RELENTLESS AND INSISTENT.
I...HAD TO MEET AN OLD FRIEND.
THE GIRL, ON THE OTHER HAND, CAN'T CONCEAL HER FEAR.
LOOK, YOU SAVED MY LIFE. I COULDN'T JUST LEAVE YOU HERE.
BUT WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU? YOU'VE GOT FANGS AND A FRIDGE FULL OF BLOOD. YOU'RE... YOU'RE A...
HER HEART POUNDS LIKE A KETTLE DRUM. PULSE THUNDERING, ADRENALINE FLOODING HER BODY.
A VAMPIRE? OF SORTS. I'M FINE NOW. YOU SHOULD GO, MISS...?
SOMETHING IN HUMANS MAKES THEM FEAR ME, INSTINCTIVELY.
MOST HUMANS, ANYWAY.
SOFIA. MY NAME'S SOFIA.
PEOPLE I KNOW WALKED INTO THAT CLUB AND NEVER CAME OUT. THAT EVIL BITCH WITH THE TENTACLES TRIED TO KILL ME.
YOU'RE GOING TO NEED HELP. LIKE IT OR NOT, I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE.
AS YOU WISH, SOFIA.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO ASSIST ME...
...YOU CAN HELP ME ACCESSORIZE.
IT'S TOO CONVENIENT.
DRACULA'S SUDDEN "HELPFUL" WARNING.
...WOW.
PLAYING ON MY DESIRE TO SAVE HUMANITY.
KLIK
THE BUZZING IN MY SKULL, THRUMMING MORE STRONGLY NOW.
DRAWING ME INEXORABLY IN, LIKE THE PULL OF A MAGNET.
DANCING TO DRACULA'S TUNE.
A TRAP, OBVIOUSLY.
CHAK

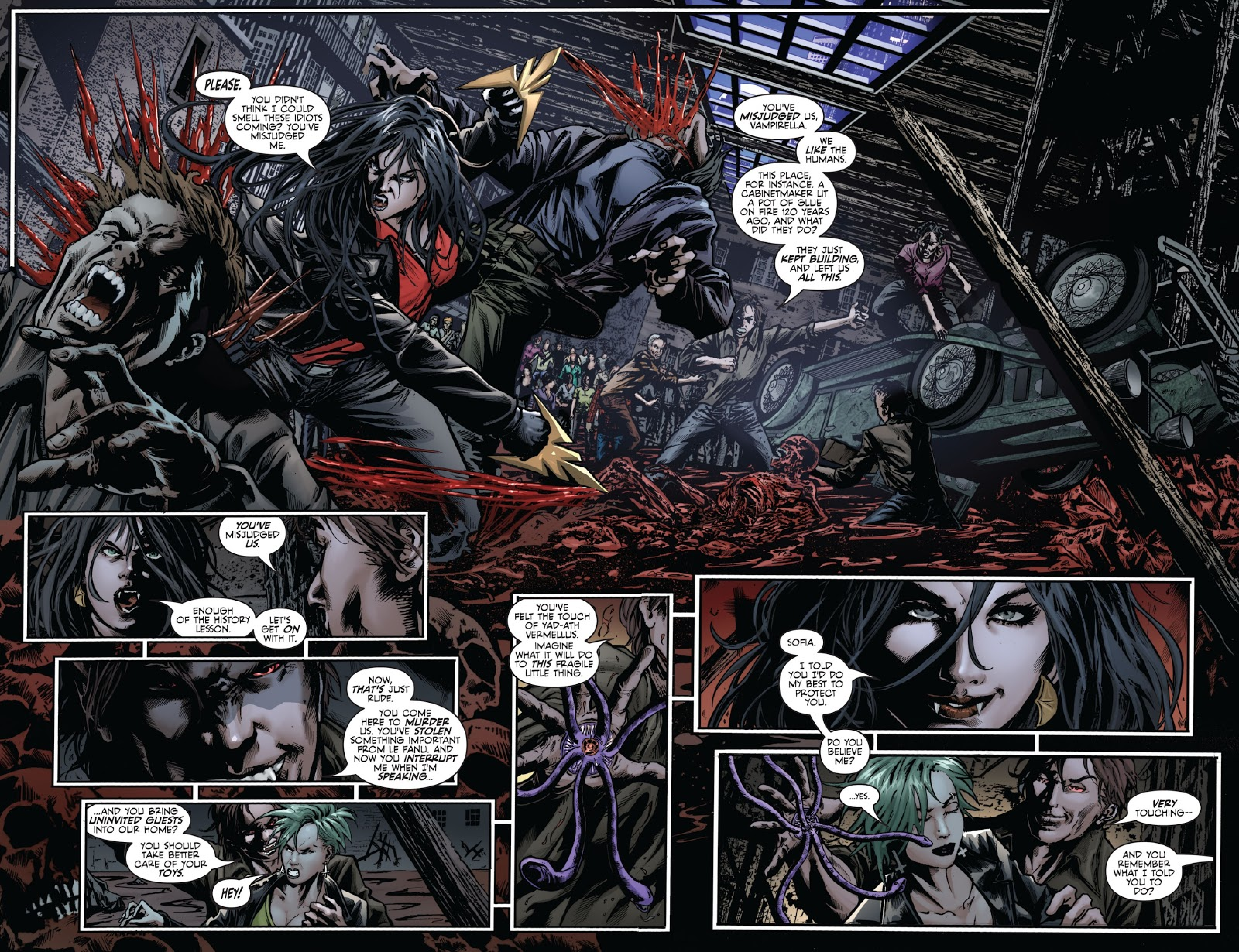

SO BE IT.
IF DRACULA THINKS HE CAN TRAP ME, **FINE**.
HE'S GOING TO LEARN THAT HOLDING ME IS A DIFFERENT PROPOSITION ALTOGETHER.
SO, WHAT NOW?
NOW, WE GO **HUNTING**.
VAMPIRELLA in...
(Crown of Worms, part 3)
"THE LESSER EVIL"

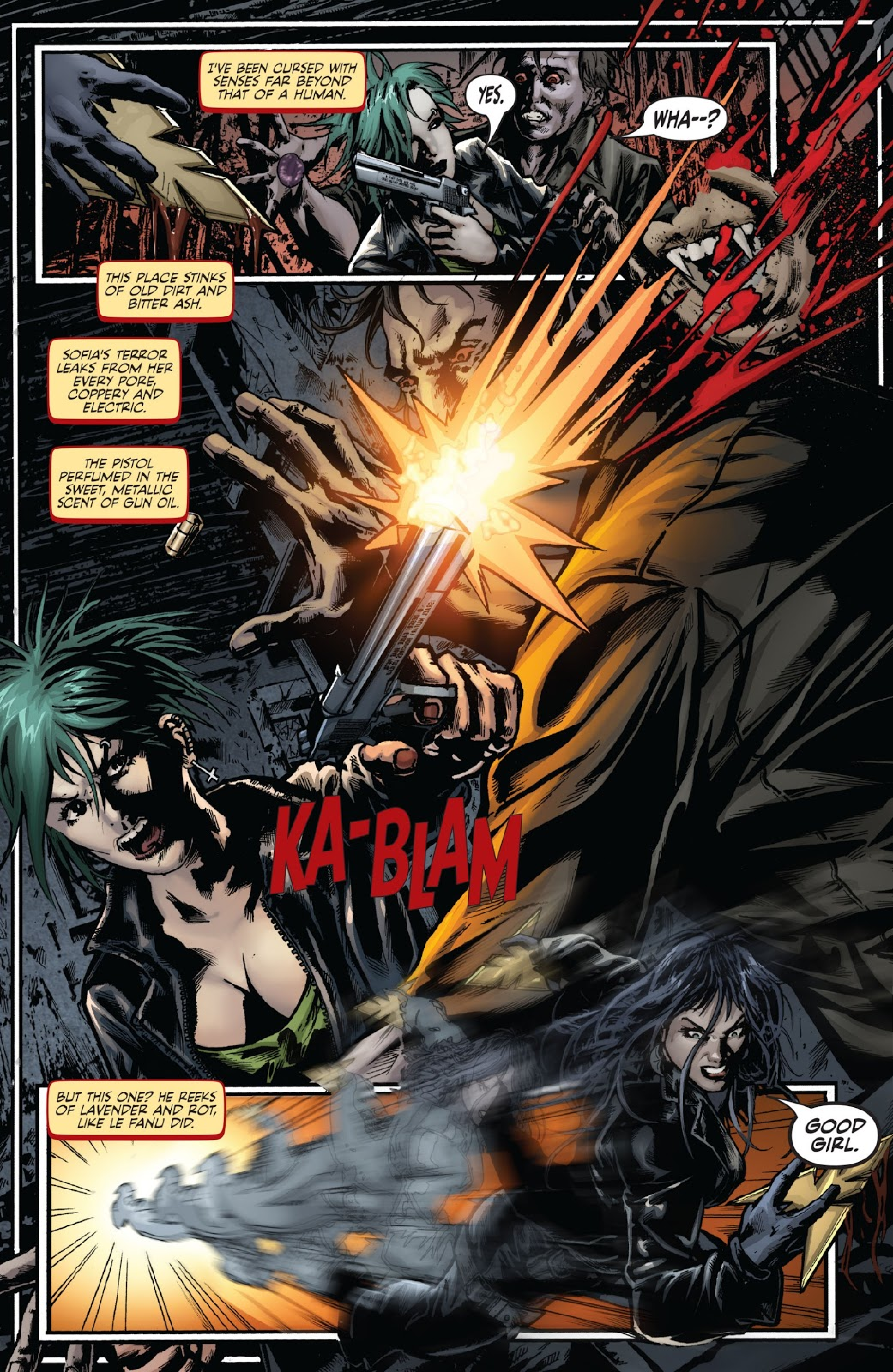
DYNAMITE®
4
VAMPIRELLA®

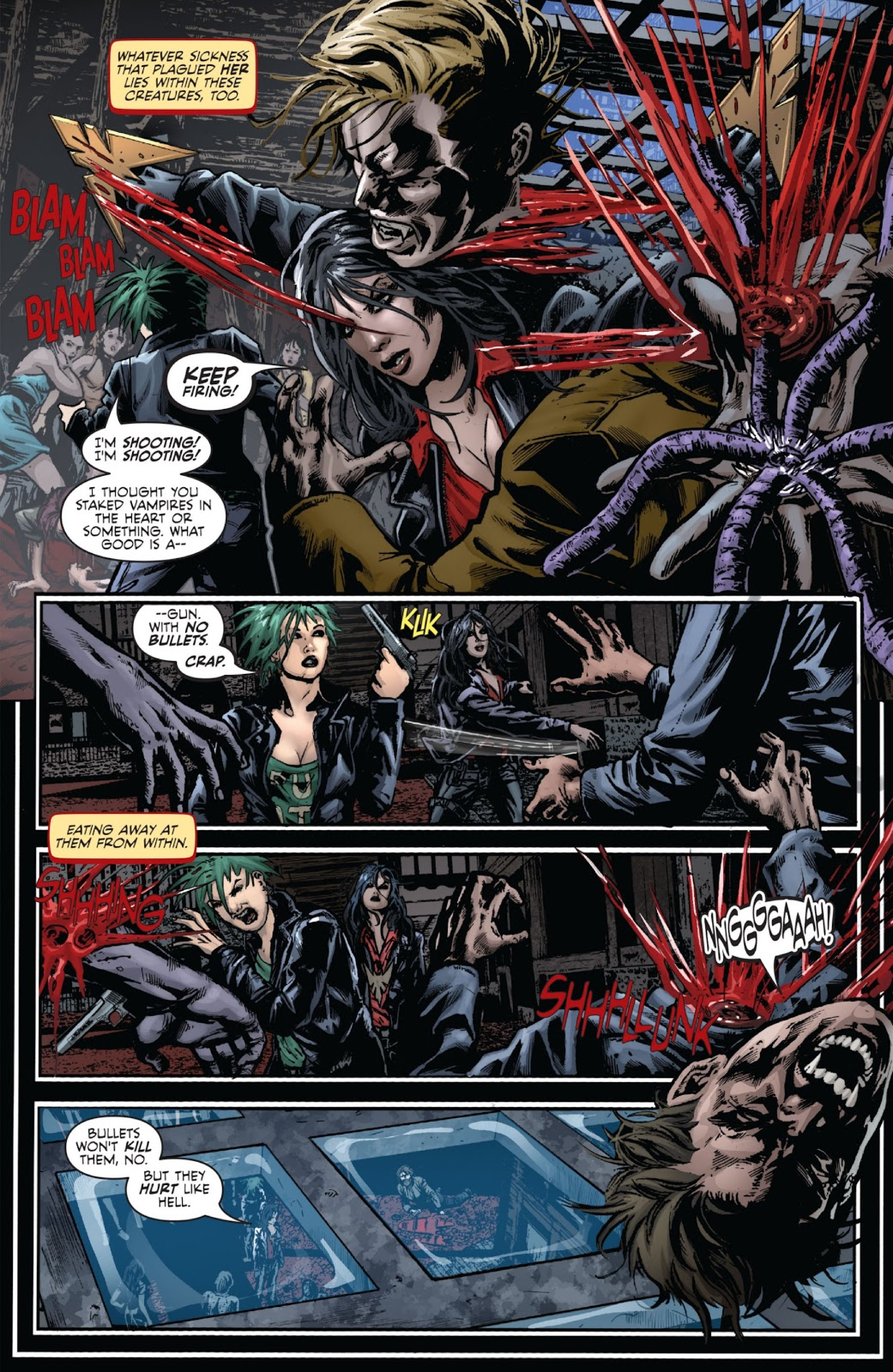

PIONEER SQUARE
SEATTLE, WA 2 A.M.
SOMETHING HAPPENED TO ME. SOMETHING **BAD**.
SOMETHING THAT DRACULA'S BITCH LIEUTENANT, LE FANU, DID TO MY MIND.
SOMEWHERE BETWEEN A CONSTANT BUZZING IN MY SKULL, AND THE INSISTENT PULL OF GRAVITY.
URGING ME ON. SENDING DARK THOUGHTS SCAMPERING THROUGH MY BRAIN, FURTIVE AS RATS.
DRAGGING ME DOWN **HERE**, TO THIS DEAD PLACE, ON THE HUNT FOR DEAD THINGS.
THIS IS A **HORRIBLE** IDEA.
YOU **COULD** HAVE STAYED BEHIND, YOU KNOW.
YOU COULD HAVE USED YOUR VAMPIRE HYPNOSIS MOJO ON ME AND **MADE** ME STAY BEHIND.
DEAD THINGS THAT ARE ALSO ON THE HUNT FOR **US**.
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THEY'RE EVEN DOWN HERE, ANYWAY?
THEY'RE DOWN HERE.
A TRAP, AND AN OBVIOUS ONE. BUT THOSE FLEETING WHISPERS IN MY HEAD ARE PROMISING ME...
THIS ISN'T A GAME, SOFIA.
I'LL DO MY BEST TO PROTECT YOU, BUT DON'T HESITATE. SHOOT **ANYTHING** THAT MOVES, AND THEN YOU **RUN** LIKE HELL.

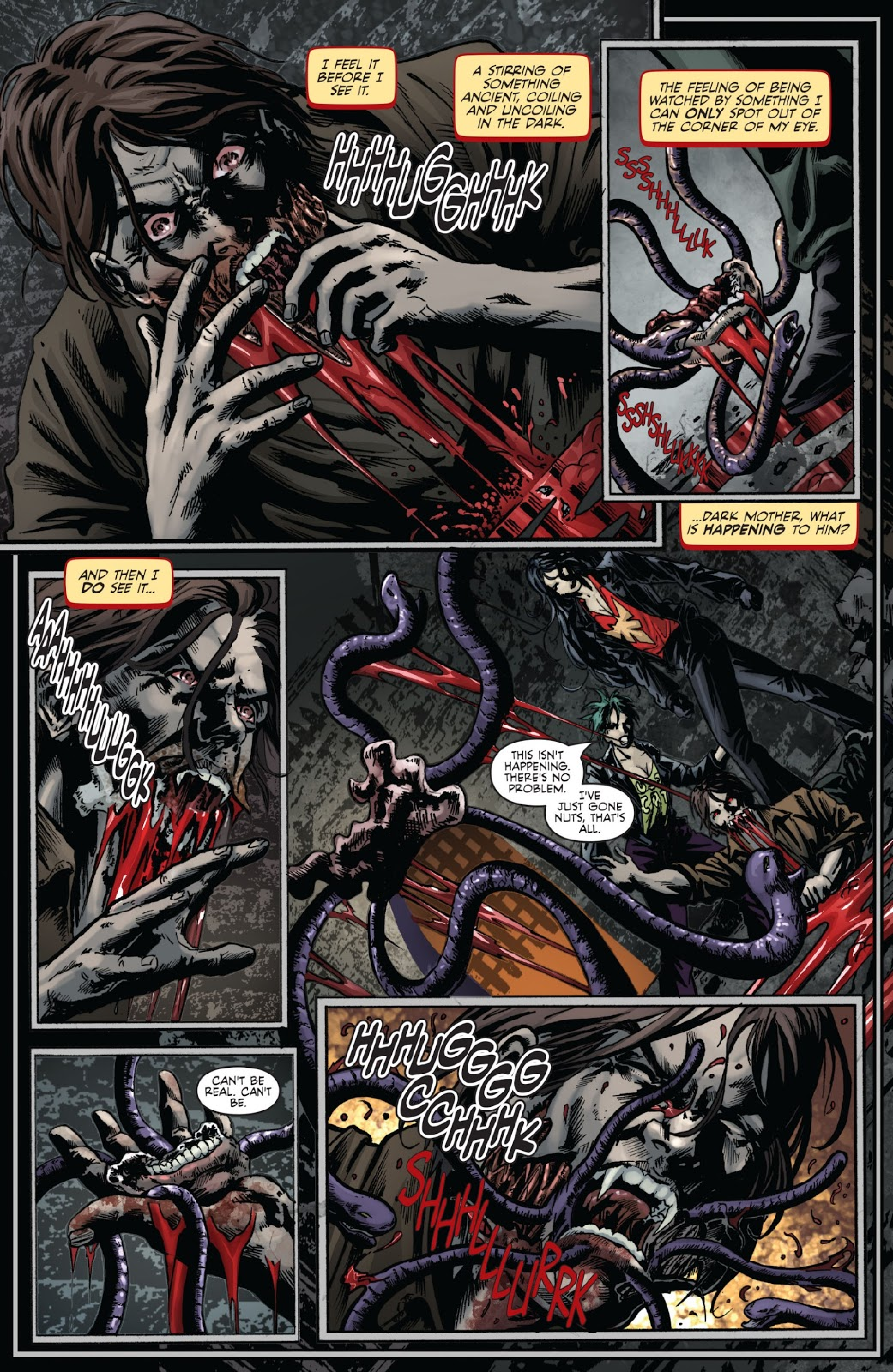

...WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN DOWN HERE IN THE DARK SIMPLY MUST HAPPEN.
YEAH? AND WHO'S GOING TO PROTECT YOU?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
A PERFECT HUNTING GROUND, HERE IN THE CORPSE OF THE PAST.
I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF.

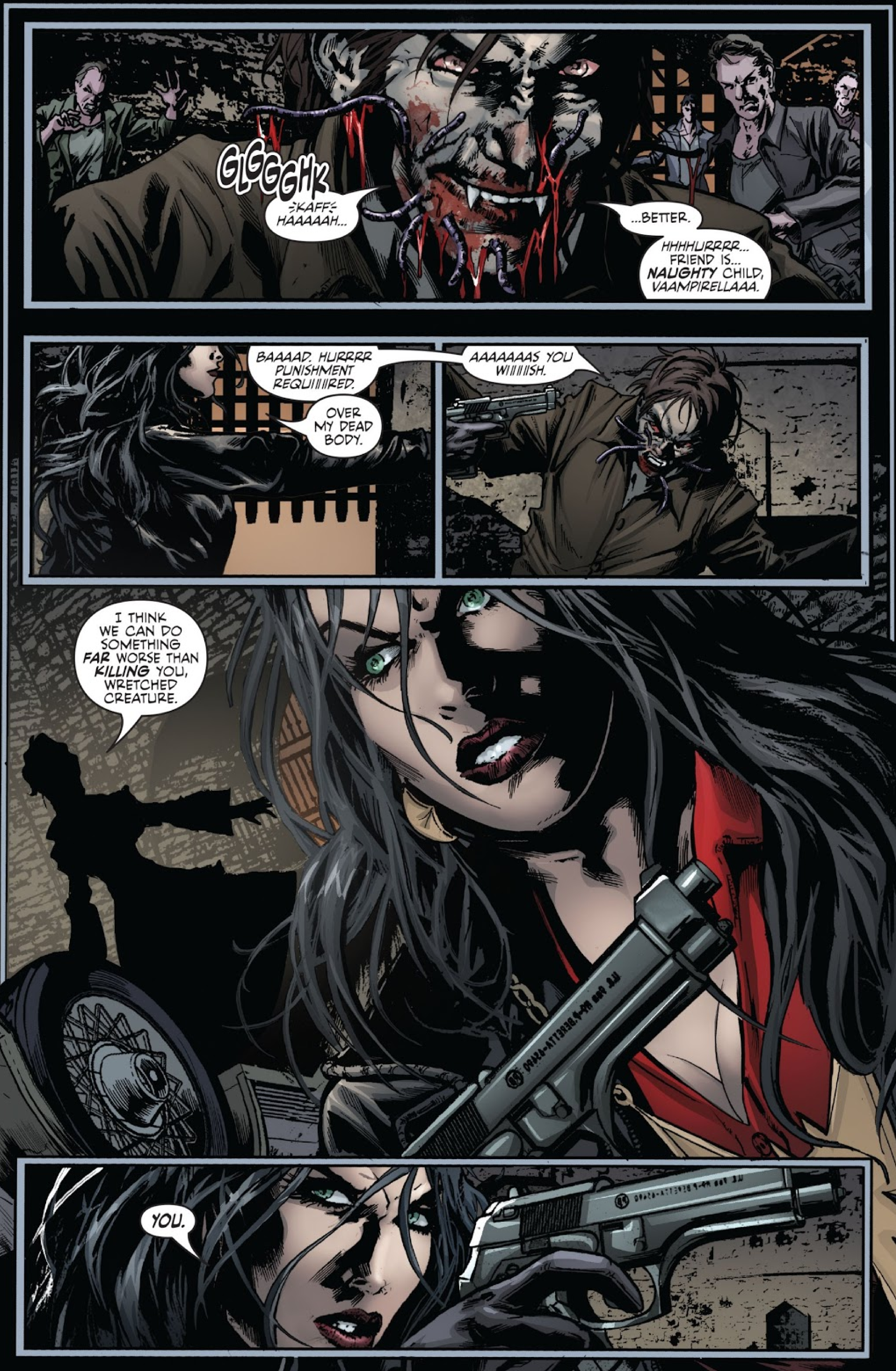

THEY CALL IT THE UNDERGROUND.
THE CITY STREETS ABOVE WERE BUILT ON THE REMAINS OF THIS PLACE, AFTER A RUNAWAY FIRE BURNED 25 CITY BLOCKS TO ASH.
A SUNKEN CITY, HIDDEN AWAY FROM PRYING EYES.
GLASS BLOCKS SET INTO THE SIDEWALKS ABOVE PROVIDING THE BAREST HINT OF TWILIGHT IN THIS HOLE.
THE HOLE I'LL BURY THEM ALL IN.
SNFF SNFF
YOU MUST BE THE WELCOMING COMMITTEE.
I'M INSULTED. AFTER WHAT I DID TO LE FANU, I EXPECTED MORE FANFARE.
SHING
DON'T WORRY, VAMPIRELLA.
I'M SURE YOU'LL FIND THIS A MEMORABLE GREETING.
MEET SOME OF MY FRIENDS.

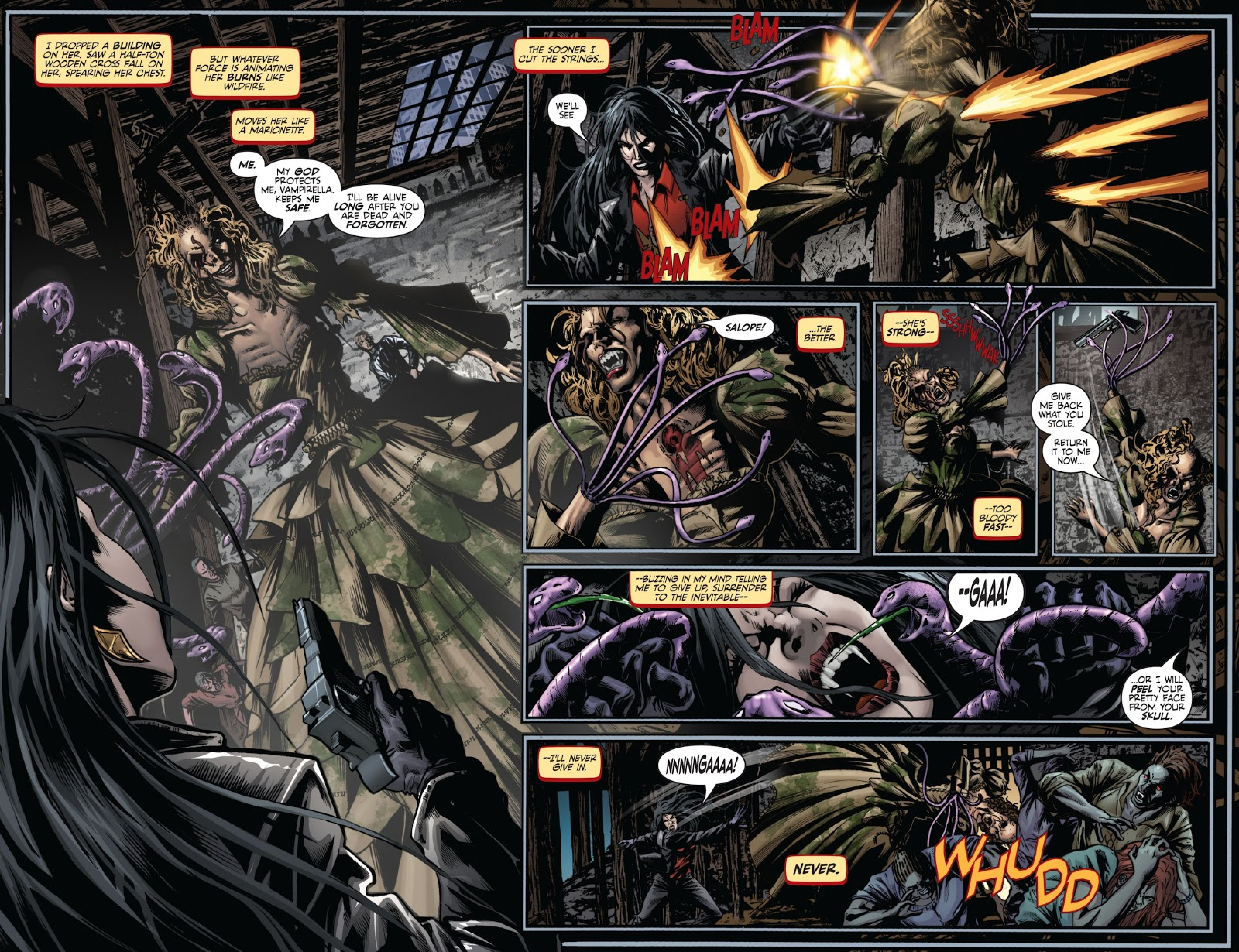

PLEASE.
YOU DIDN'T THINK I COULD SMELL THESE IDIOTS COMING? YOU'VE MISJUDGED ME.
YOU'VE MISJUDGED US, VAMPIRELLA.
WE LIKE THE HUMANS.
THIS PLACE, FOR INSTANCE. A CABINETMAKER LIT A POT OF GLUE ON FIRE 120 YEARS AGO, AND WHAT DID THEY DO?
THEY JUST KEPT BUILDING, AND LEFT US ALL THIS.
YOU'VE MISJUDGED US.
ENOUGH OF THE HISTORY LESSON.
LET'S GET ON WITH IT.
NOW, THAT'S JUST RUDE.
YOU COME HERE TO MURDER US. YOU'VE STOLEN SOMETHING IMPORTANT FROM LE FANU. AND NOW YOU INTERRUPT ME WHEN I'M SPEAKING...
...AND YOU BRING UNINVITED GUESTS INTO OUR HOME?
YOU SHOULD TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOUR TOYS.
HEY!
YOU'VE FELT THE TOUCH OF YAD-ATH VERMELLUS.
IMAGINE WHAT IT WILL DO TO THIS FRAGILE LITTLE THING.
SOFIA.
I TOLD YOU I'D DO MY BEST TO PROTECT YOU.
DO YOU BELIEVE ME?
...YES.
VERY TOUCHING--
AND YOU REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU TO DO?

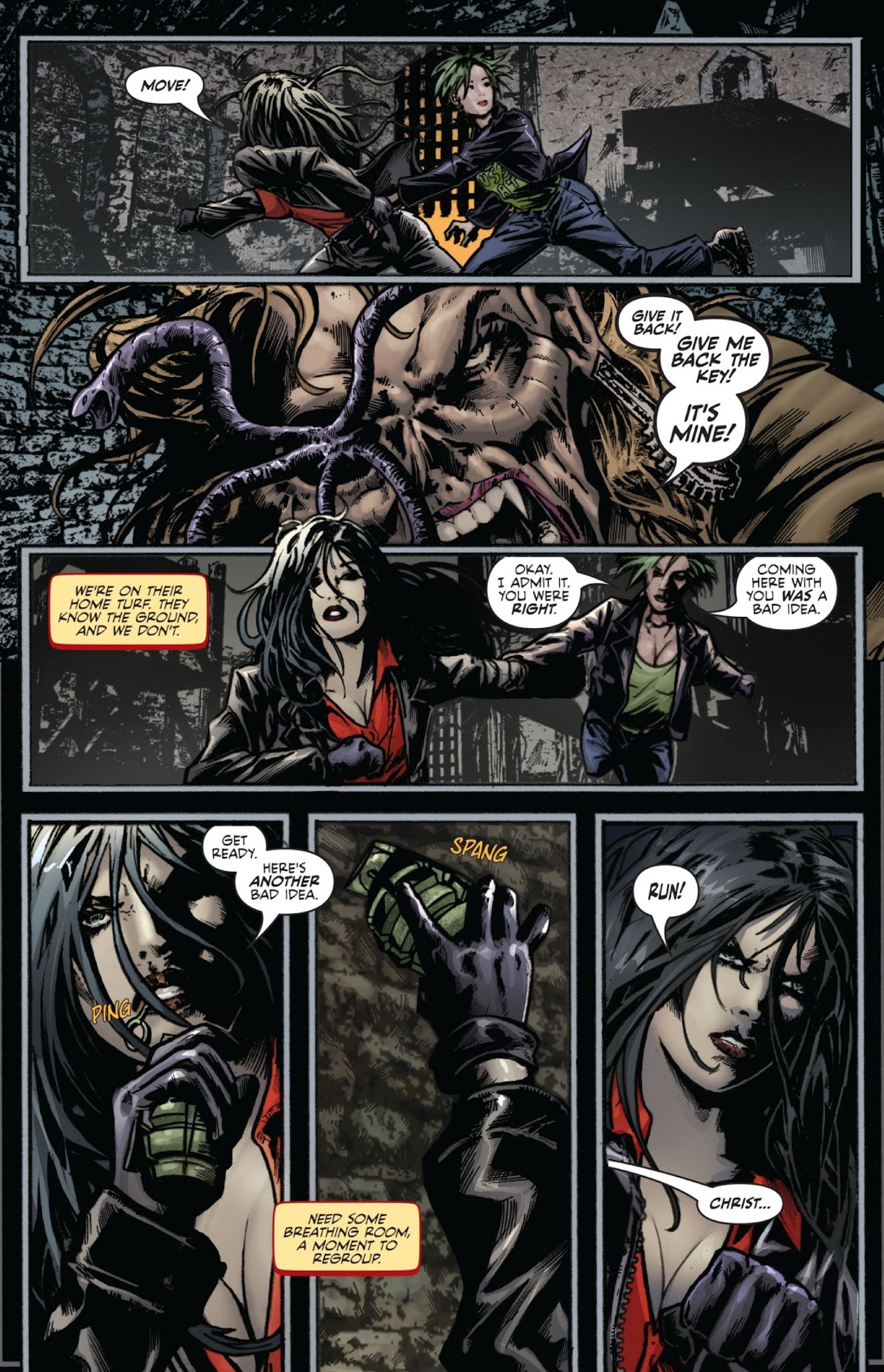

I'VE BEEN CURSED WITH SENSES FAR BEYOND THAT OF A HUMAN.
YES.
WHA--?
THIS PLACE STINKS OF OLD DIRT AND BITTER ASH.
SOFIA'S TERROR LEAKS FROM HER EVERY PORE, COPPERY AND ELECTRIC.
THE PISTOL PERFUMED IN THE SWEET, METALLIC SCENT OF GUN OIL.
KA-BLAM
BUT THIS ONE? HE REEKS OF LAVENDER AND ROT, LIKE LE FANU DID.
GOOD GIRL.

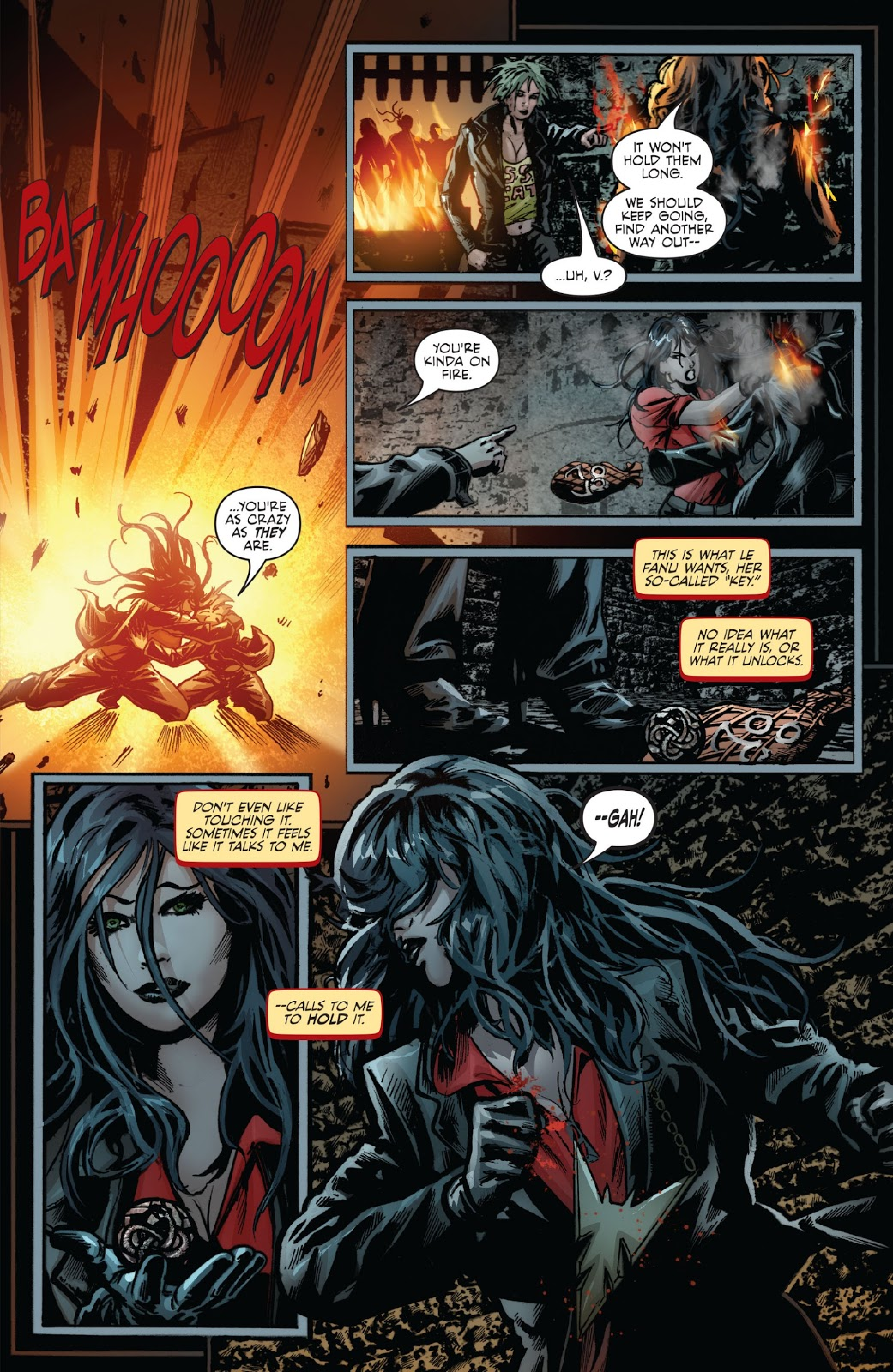

WHATEVER SICKNESS THAT PLAGUED HER LIES WITHIN THESE CREATURES, TOO.
BLAM BLAM BLAM
KEEP FIRING!
I'M SHOOTING! I'M SHOOTING!
I THOUGHT YOU STAKED VAMPIRES IN THE HEART OR SOMETHING. WHAT GOOD IS A--
--GUN. WITH NO BULLETS.
CRAP.
KLIK
EATING AWAY AT THEM FROM WITHIN.
SHHHING
NNGGGGAAAH!
SHHHLUNK
BULLETS WON'T KILL THEM, NO.
BUT THEY HURT LIKE HELL.

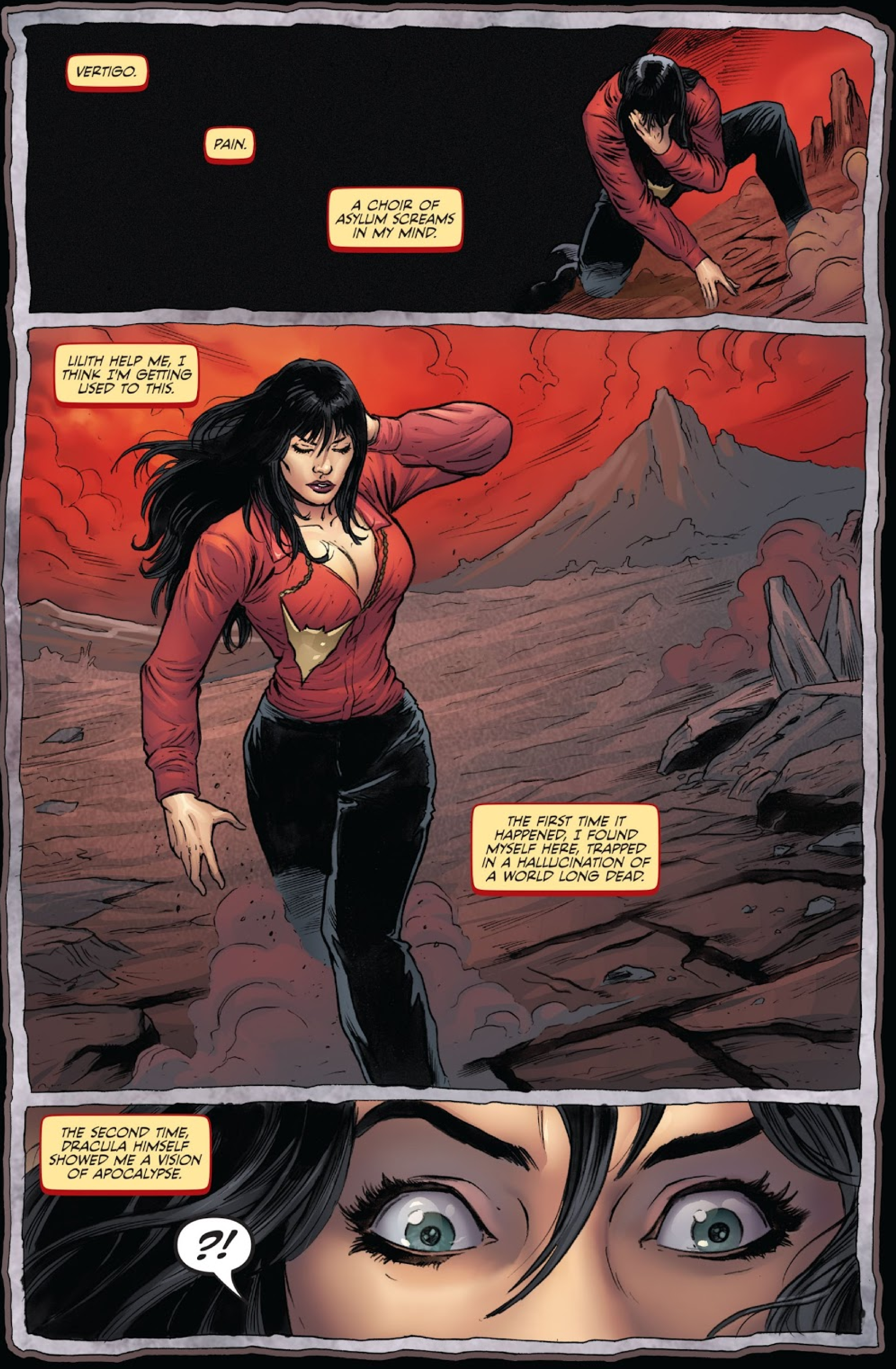

I FEEL IT BEFORE I SEE IT.
A STIRRING OF SOMETHING ANCIENT, COILING AND UNCOILING IN THE DARK.
HHHUGGHHHK
THE FEELING OF BEING WATCHED BY SOMETHING I CAN **ONLY** SPOT OUT OF THE CORNER OF MY EYE.
SSSSHHHLLLUK
SSSHSHLLUKKKK
...DARK MOTHER, WHAT IS **HAPPENING** TO HIM?
AND THEN I **DO** SEE IT...
AAAHHHHUUGGK
THIS ISN'T HAPPENING. THERE'S NO PROBLEM.
I'VE JUST GONE NUTS, THAT'S ALL.
CAN'T BE REAL. CAN'T BE.
HHHUGGGG CCHHHK
SHHHLLLURRK

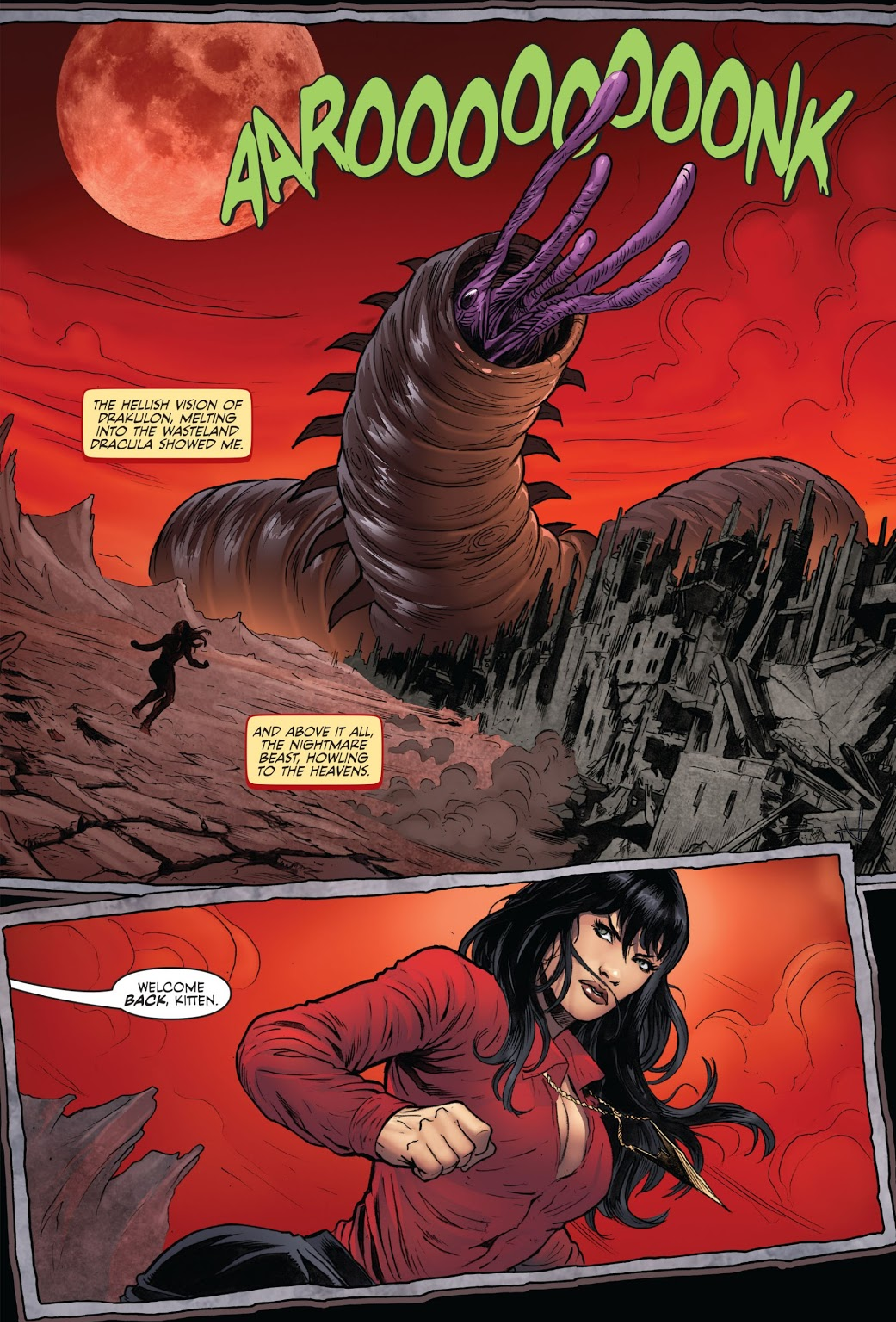

GLGGGHK
=KAFF= HAAAAAH...
...BETTER.
HHHHURRRR... FRIEND IS... NAUGHTY CHILD, VAAMPIRELLAAA.
BAAAAD. HURRRR PUNISHMENT REQUIIIIIRED.
OVER MY DEAD BODY.
AAAAAAAS YOU WIIIIIISH.
I THINK WE CAN DO SOMETHING FAR WORSE THAN KILLING YOU, WRETCHED CREATURE.
YOU.

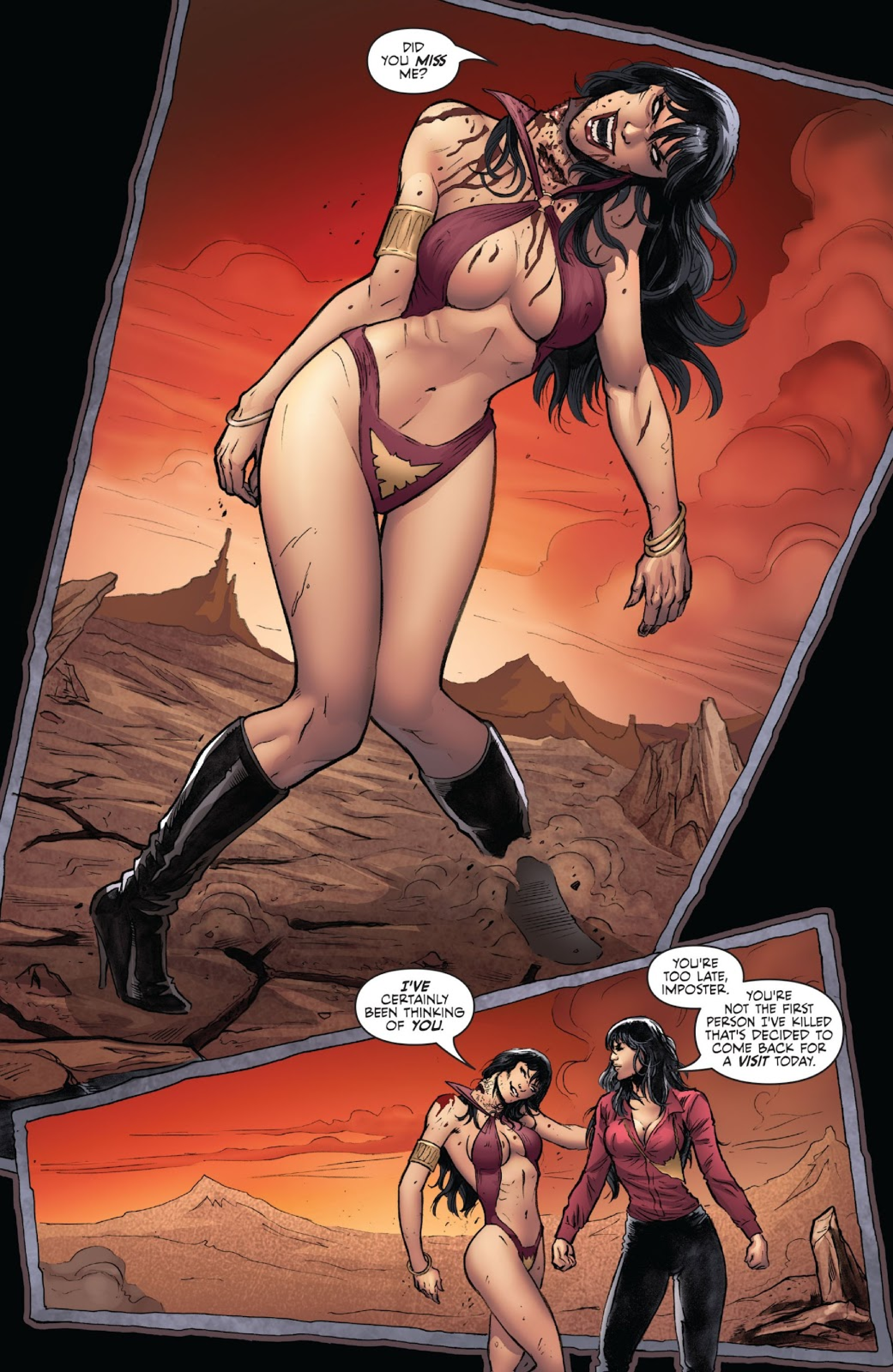

I DROPPED A **BUILDING** ON HER. SAW A HALF-TON WOODEN CROSS FALL ON HER, SPEARING HER CHEST.
BUT WHATEVER FORCE IS ANIMATING HER **BURNS** LIKE WILDFIRE.
MOVES HER LIKE A MARIONETTE.
ME.
MY **GOD** PROTECTS ME, VAMPIRELLA. KEEPS ME **SAFE**.
I'LL BE ALIVE **LONG** AFTER YOU ARE DEAD AND **FORGOTTEN**.
BLAM
THE SOONER I CUT THE STRINGS...
WE'LL SEE.
BLAM
BLAM
SALOPE!
...THE BETTER.
--SHE'S **STRONG**--
SSSHWWWAK
--TOO BLOODY **FAST**--
GIVE ME BACK WHAT YOU STOLE.
RETURN IT TO ME NOW...
--BUZZING IN MY MIND TELLING ME TO GIVE UP, SURRENDER TO THE INEVITABLE--
--GAAA!
...OR I WILL **PEEL** YOUR PRETTY FACE FROM YOUR **SKULL**.
--I'LL NEVER GIVE IN.
NNNNNGAAAA!
NEVER.
WHUDD

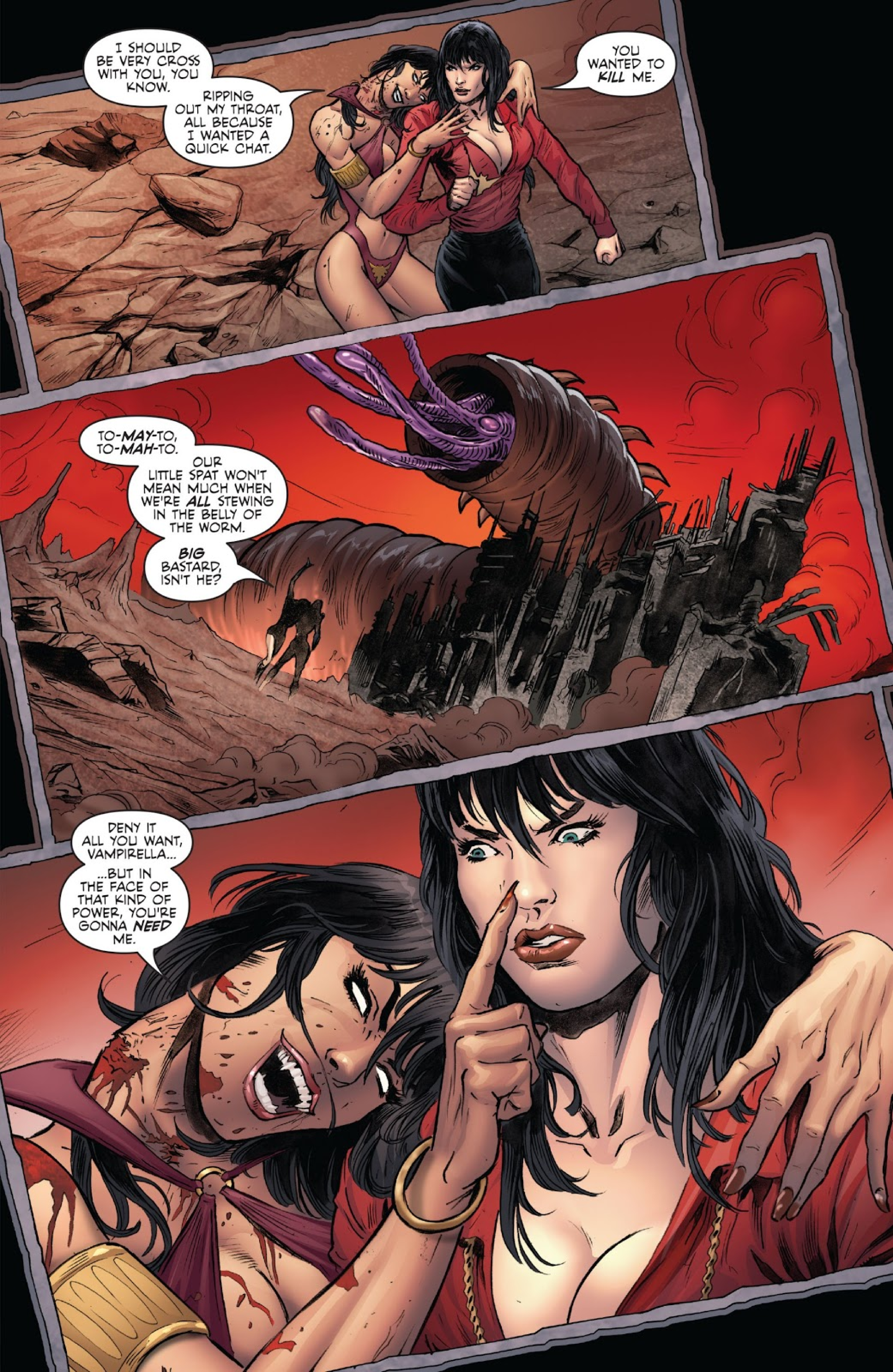

MOVE!
GIVE IT BACK!
GIVE ME BACK THE KEY!
IT'S MINE!
WE'RE ON THEIR HOME TURF. THEY KNOW THE GROUND, AND WE DON'T.
OKAY. I ADMIT IT. YOU WERE *RIGHT.*
COMING HERE WITH YOU *WAS* A BAD IDEA.
GET READY.
HERE'S *ANOTHER* BAD IDEA.
PING
SPANG
NEED SOME BREATHING ROOM, A MOMENT TO REGROUP.
RUN!
CHRIST...

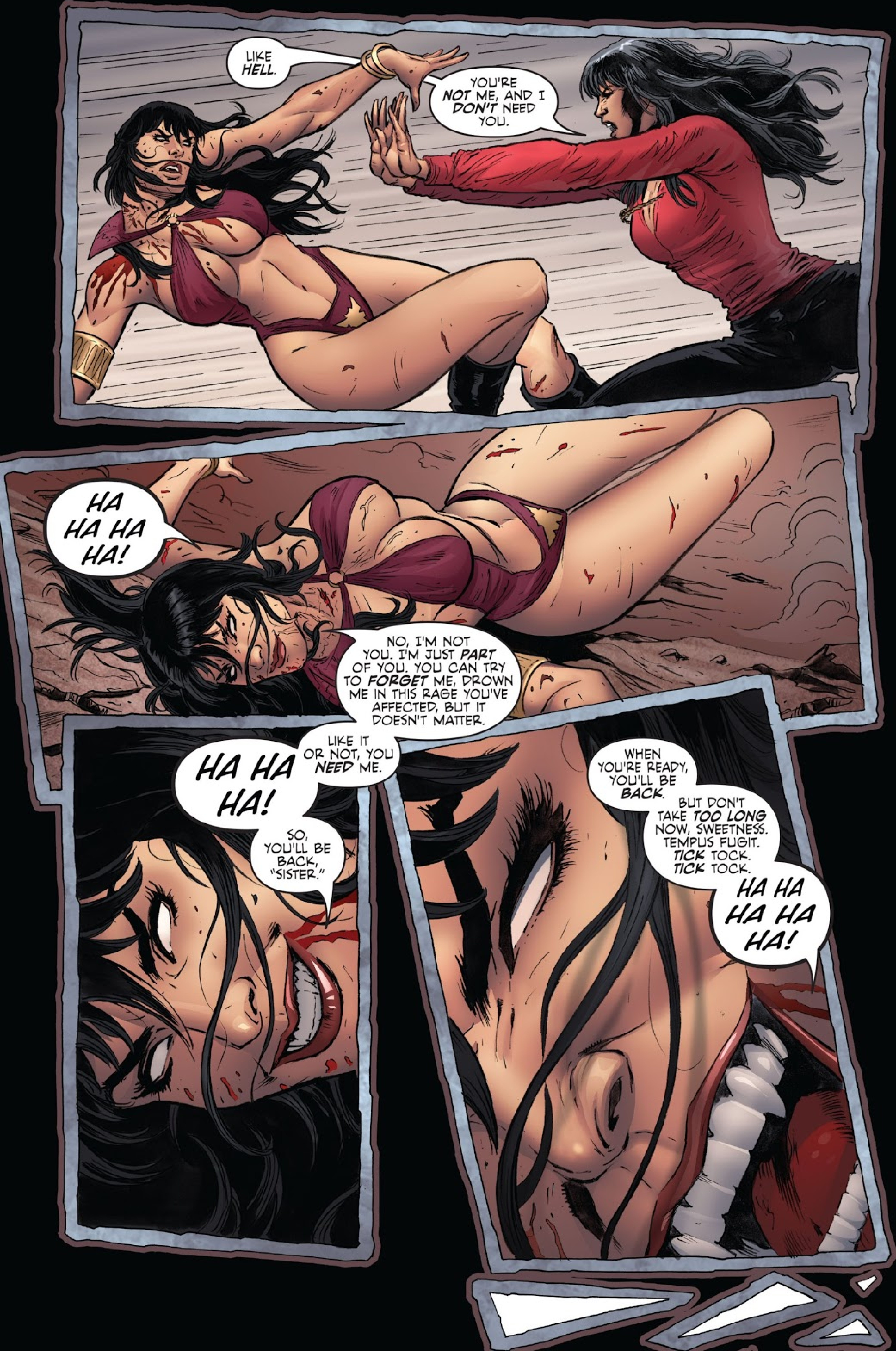

BA-WHOOOOM
IT WON'T HOLD THEM LONG.
WE SHOULD KEEP GOING, FIND ANOTHER WAY OUT--
...UH, V.?
YOU'RE KINDA ON FIRE.
...YOU'RE AS CRAZY AS *THEY* ARE.
THIS IS WHAT LE FANU WANTS, HER SO-CALLED "KEY."
NO IDEA WHAT IT REALLY IS, OR WHAT IT UNLOCKS.
DON'T EVEN LIKE TOUCHING IT. SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE IT TALKS TO ME.
--CALLS TO ME TO *HOLD* IT.
--GAH!

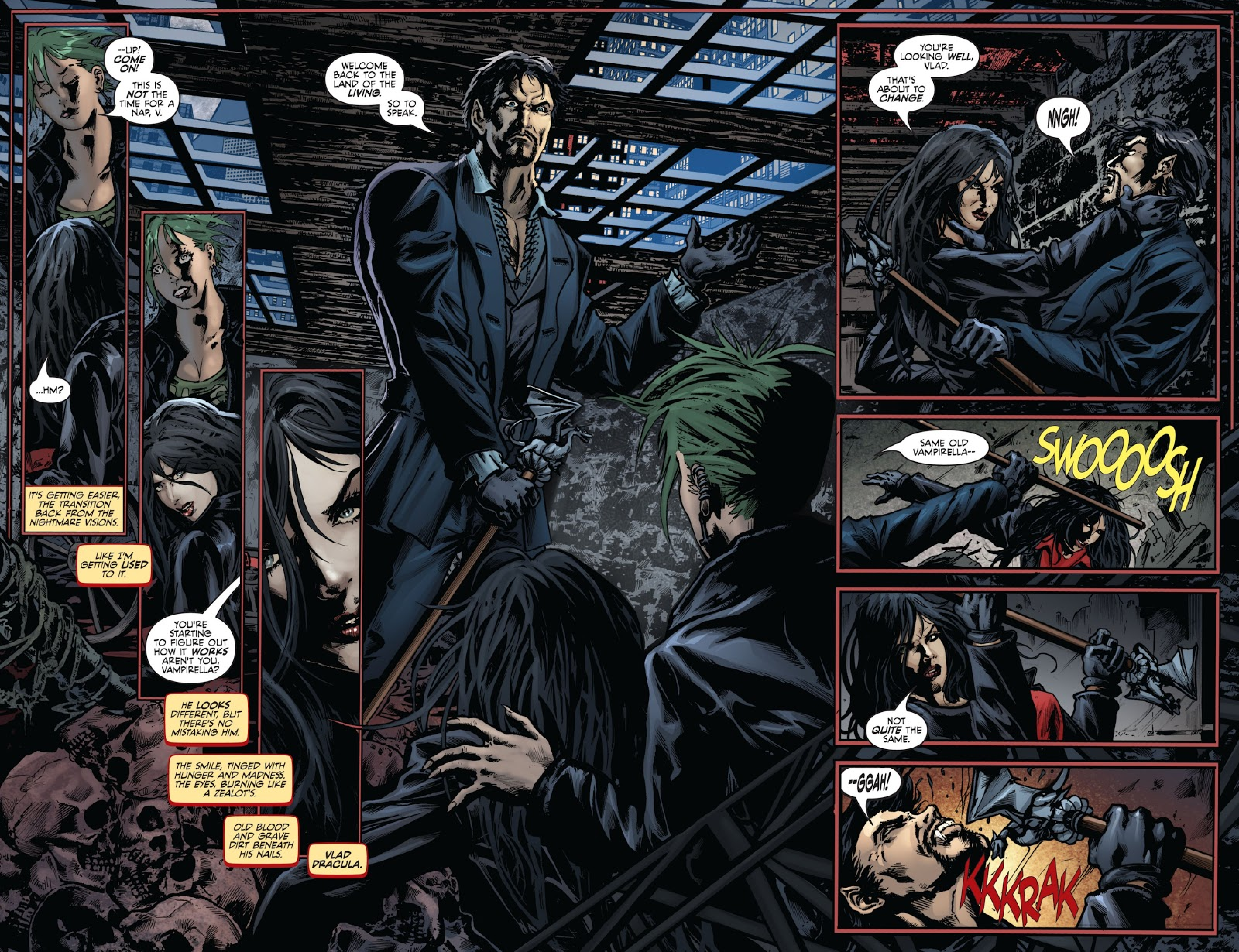

VERTIGO.
PAIN.
A CHOIR OF ASYLUM SCREAMS IN MY MIND.
LILITH HELP ME, I THINK I'M GETTING USED TO THIS.
THE FIRST TIME IT HAPPENED, I FOUND MYSELF HERE, TRAPPED IN A HALLUCINATION OF A WORLD LONG DEAD.
THE SECOND TIME, DRACULA HIMSELF SHOWED ME A VISION OF APOCALYPSE.
?!

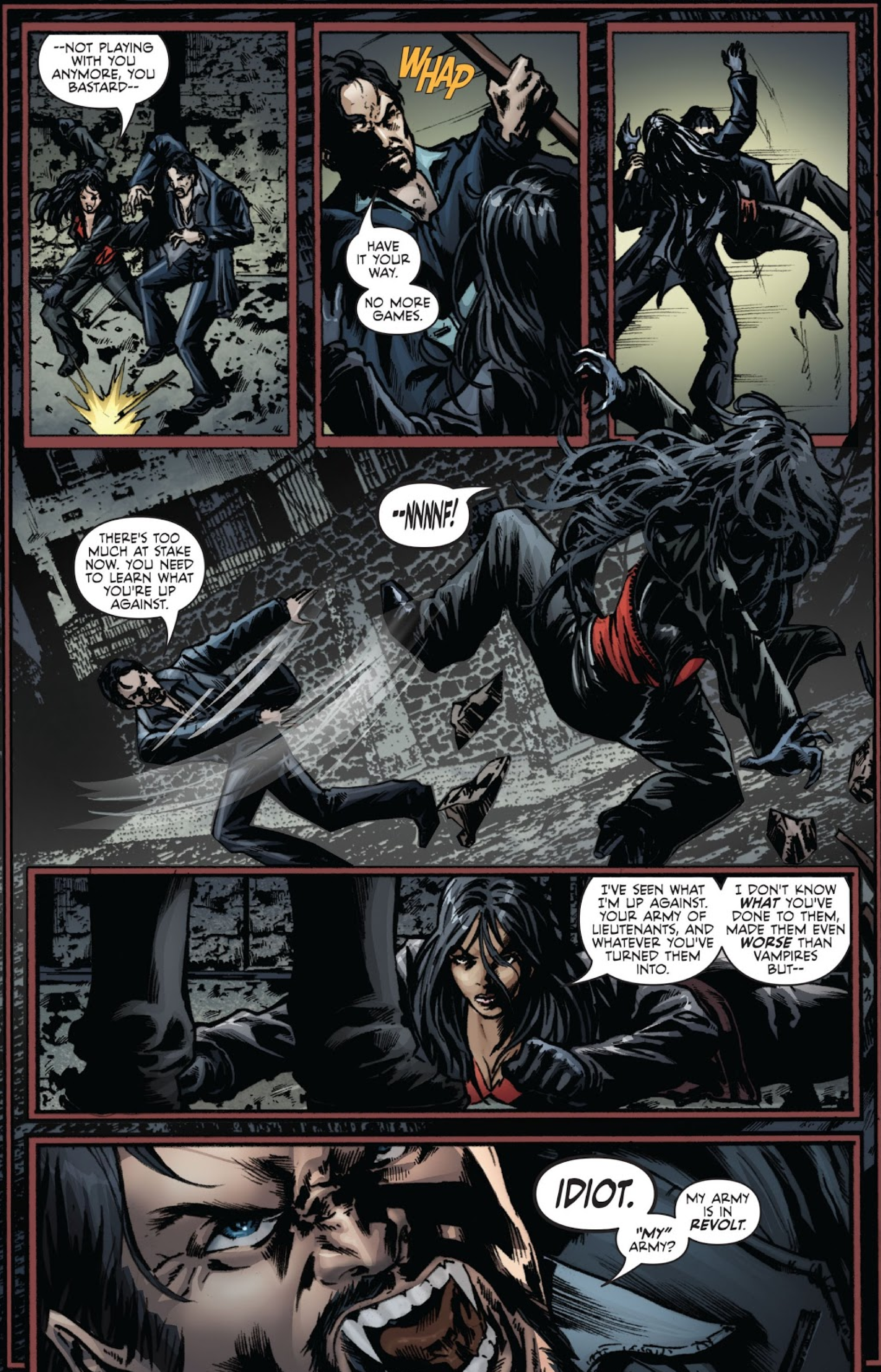

AAROOOOOOOONK
THE HELLISH VISION OF DRAKULON, MELTING INTO THE WASTELAND DRACULA SHOWED ME.
AND ABOVE IT ALL, THE NIGHTMARE BEAST, HOWLING TO THE HEAVENS.
WELCOME *BACK*, KITTEN.

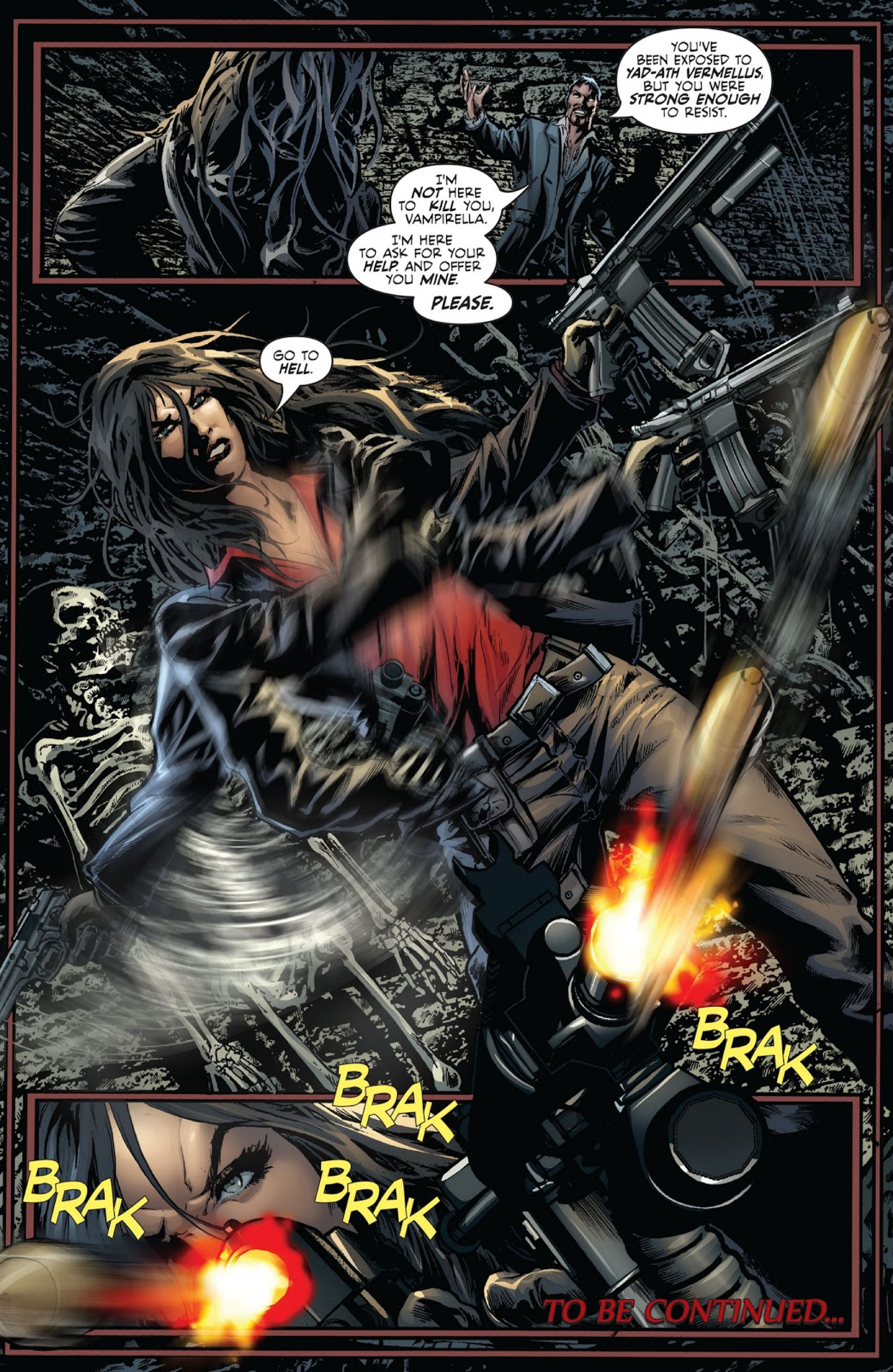

DID YOU *MISS* ME?
I'VE CERTAINLY BEEN THINKING OF *YOU*.
YOU'RE TOO LATE, IMPOSTER.
YOU'RE NOT THE FIRST PERSON I'VE KILLED THAT'S DECIDED TO COME BACK FOR A *VISIT* TODAY.


I SHOULD BE VERY CROSS WITH YOU, YOU KNOW.
RIPPING OUT MY THROAT, ALL BECAUSE I WANTED A QUICK CHAT.
YOU WANTED TO ***KILL*** ME.
TO-***MAY***-TO, TO-***MAH***-TO.
OUR LITTLE SPAT WON'T MEAN MUCH WHEN WE'RE ***ALL*** STEWING IN THE BELLY OF THE WORM.
BIG BASTARD, ISN'T HE?
DENY IT ALL YOU WANT, VAMPIRELLA...
...BUT IN THE FACE OF THAT KIND OF POWER, YOU'RE GONNA ***NEED*** ME.


LIKE HELL.
YOU'RE NOT ME, AND I DON'T NEED YOU.
HA HA HA HA HA!
NO, I'M NOT YOU. I'M JUST PART OF YOU. YOU CAN TRY TO FORGET ME, DROWN ME IN THIS RAGE YOU'VE AFFECTED, BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER.
LIKE IT OR NOT, YOU NEED ME.
HA HA HA!
SO, YOU'LL BE BACK, "SISTER."
WHEN YOU'RE READY, YOU'LL BE BACK.
BUT DON'T TAKE TOO LONG NOW, SWEETNESS. TEMPUS FUGIT. TICK TOCK. TICK TOCK.
HA HA HA HA HA!


--UP! COME ON!
THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR A NAP, V.
...HM?
IT'S GETTING EASIER, THE TRANSITION BACK FROM THE NIGHTMARE VISIONS.
LIKE I'M GETTING USED TO IT.
YOU'RE STARTING TO FIGURE OUT HOW IT WORKS AREN'T YOU, VAMPIRELLA?
HE LOOKS DIFFERENT, BUT THERE'S NO MISTAKING HIM.
THE SMILE, TINGED WITH HUNGER AND MADNESS. THE EYES, BURNING LIKE A ZEALOT'S.
OLD BLOOD AND GRAVE DIRT BENEATH HIS NAILS.
VLAD DRACULA.
WELCOME BACK TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING.
SO TO SPEAK.
YOU'RE LOOKING WELL, VLAD.
THAT'S ABOUT TO CHANGE.
NNGH!
SAME OLD VAMPIRELLA--
SWOOOOSH
NOT QUITE THE SAME.
--GGAH!
KKKRAK


--NOT PLAYING WITH YOU ANYMORE, YOU BASTARD--
WHAP
HAVE IT YOUR WAY.
NO MORE GAMES.
THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE NOW. YOU NEED TO LEARN WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST.
--NNNNF!
I'VE SEEN WHAT I'M UP AGAINST. YOUR ARMY OF LIEUTENANTS, AND WHATEVER YOU'VE TURNED THEM INTO.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO THEM, MADE THEM EVEN WORSE THAN VAMPIRES BUT--
IDIOT.
"MY" ARMY?
MY ARMY IS IN REVOLT.


YOU'VE BEEN EXPOSED TO *YAD-ATH VERMELLUS*, BUT YOU WERE *STRONG ENOUGH* TO RESIST.
I'M *NOT* HERE TO *KILL* YOU, VAMPIRELLA.
I'M HERE TO ASK FOR YOUR *HELP*. AND OFFER YOU *MINE*.
PLEASE.
GO TO *HELL*.
BRAK
BRAK
BRAK
BRAK
TO BE CONTINUED...

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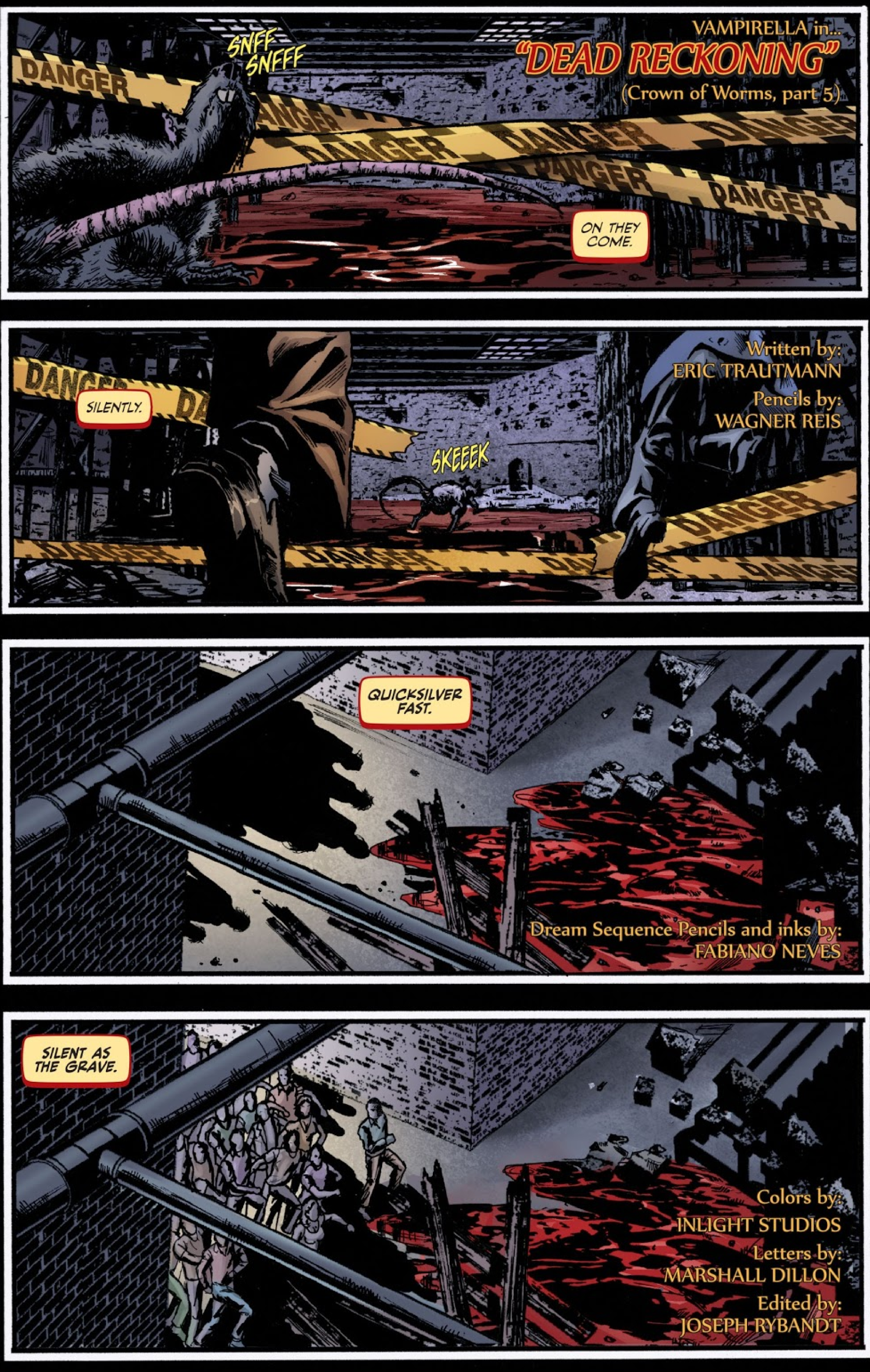


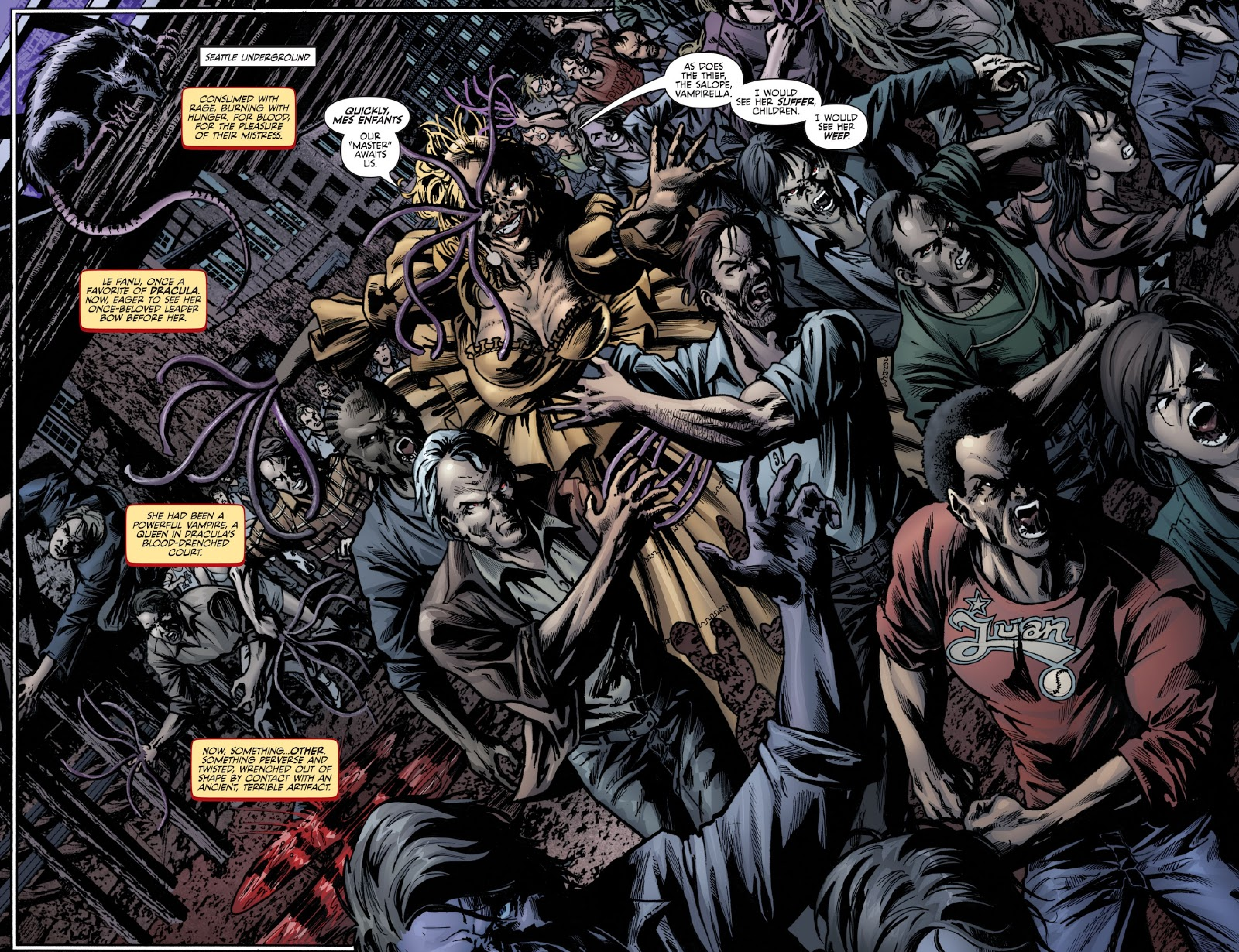
VAMPIRELLA in...

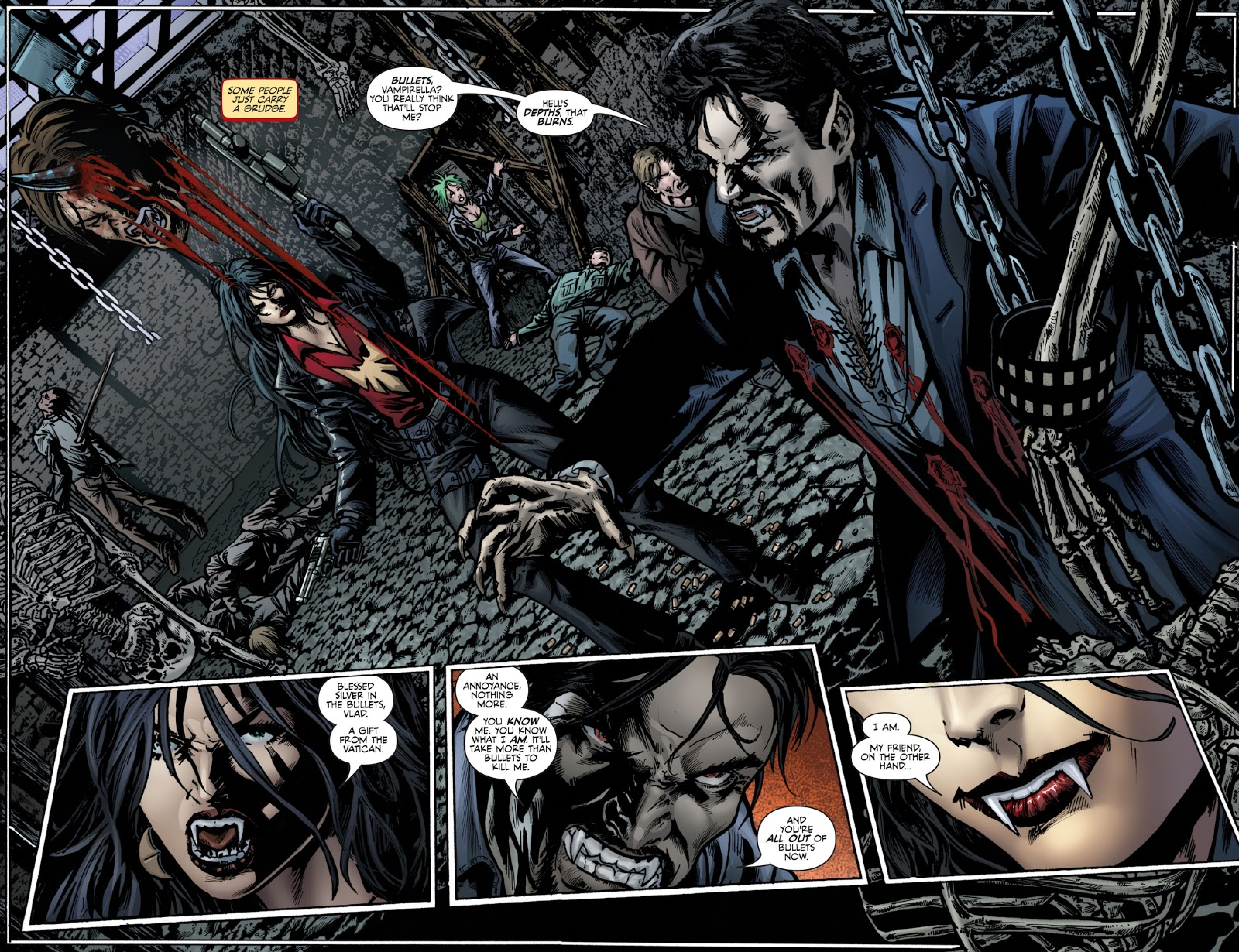
"DEAD RECKONING"

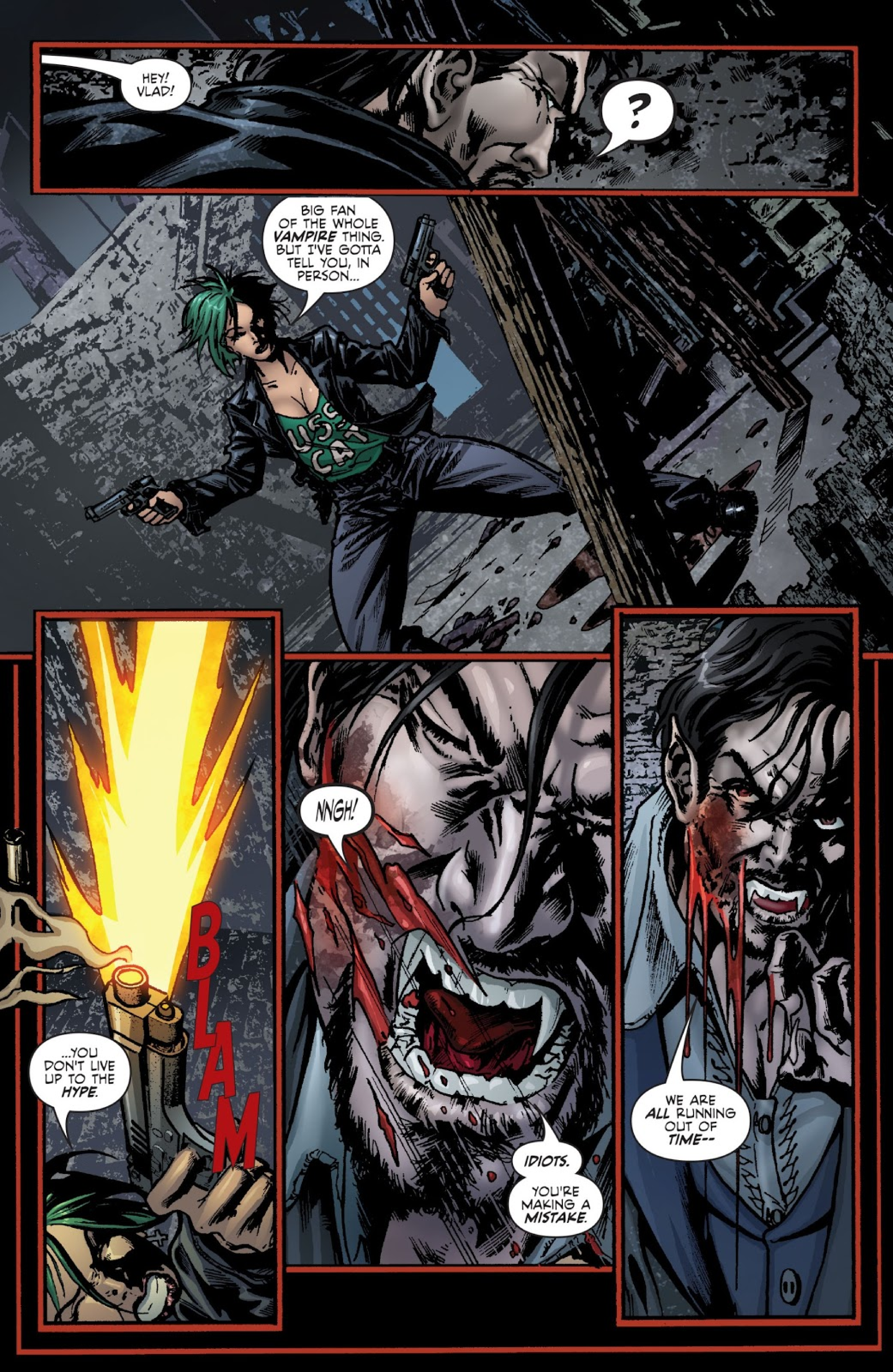
(Crown of Worms, part 5)

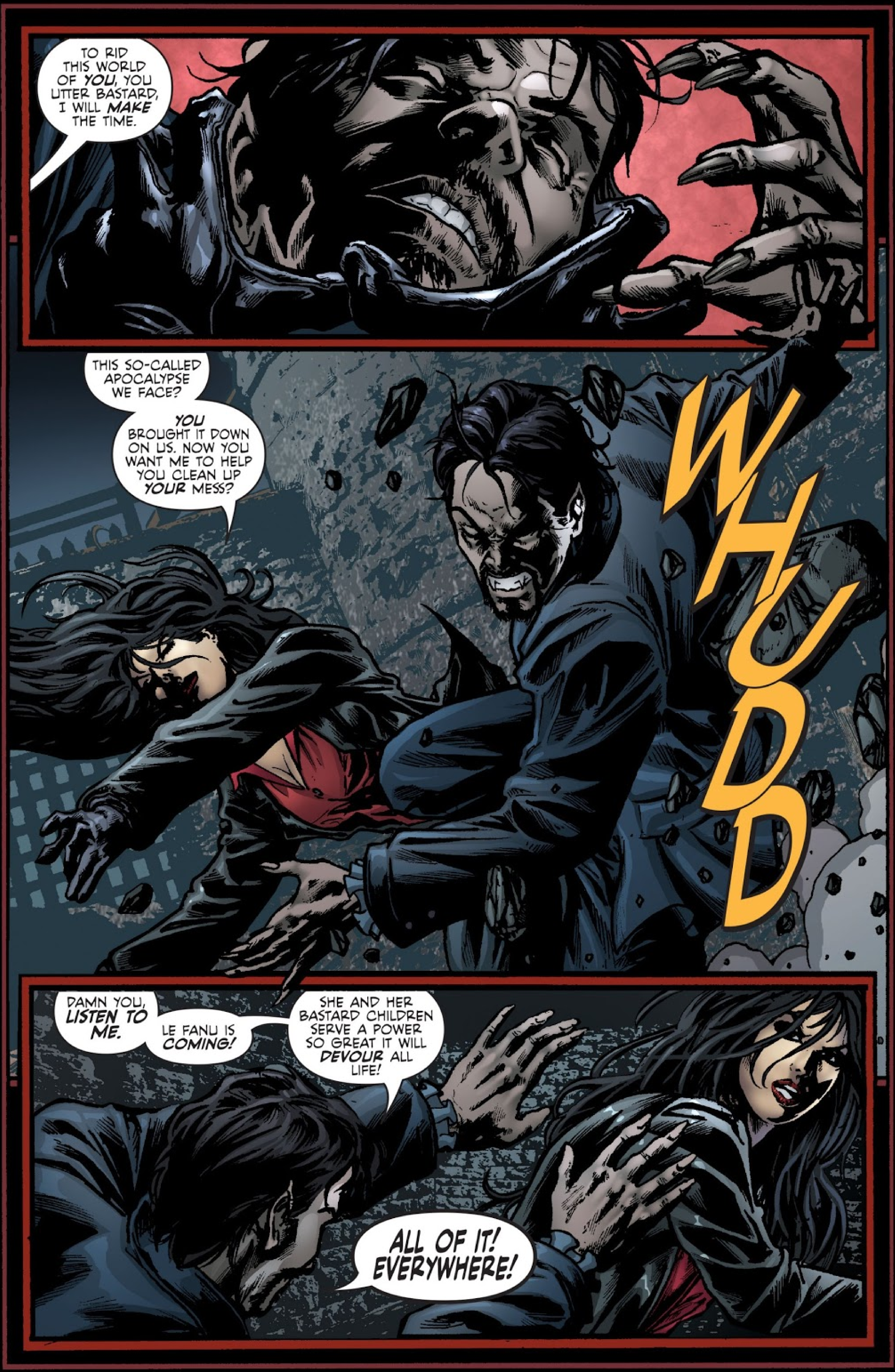
SNFF SNFFF
ON THEY COME.
SILENTLY.
SKEEEK
QUICKSILVER FAST.
SILENT AS THE GRAVE.
DANGER

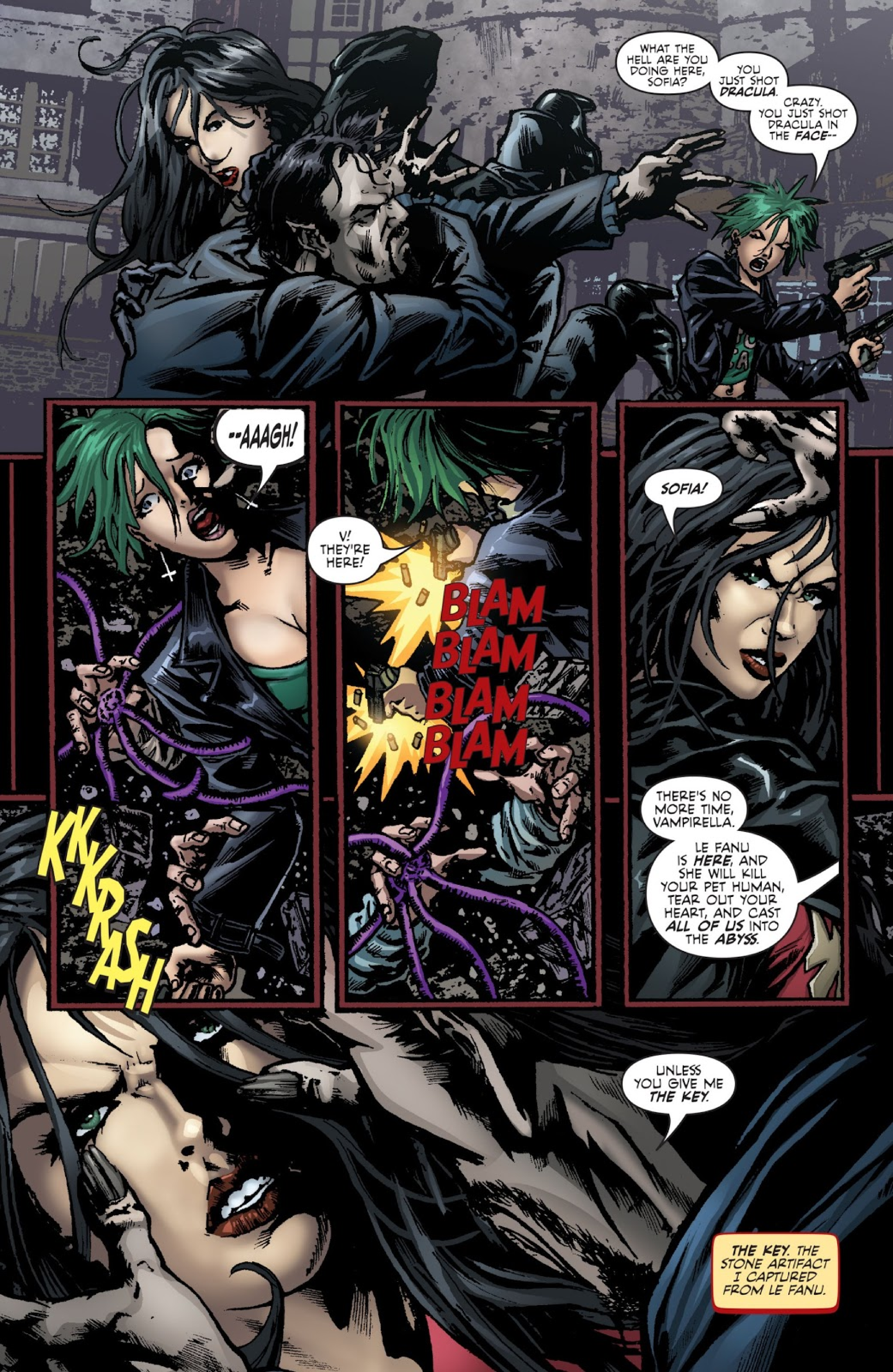
Written by:
ERIC TRAUTMANN
Pencils by:
WAGNER REIS
Dream Sequence Pencils and inks by:
FABIANO NEVES
Colors by:
INLIGHT STUDIOS
Letters by:
MARSHALL DILLON
Edited by:
JOSEPH RYBANDT

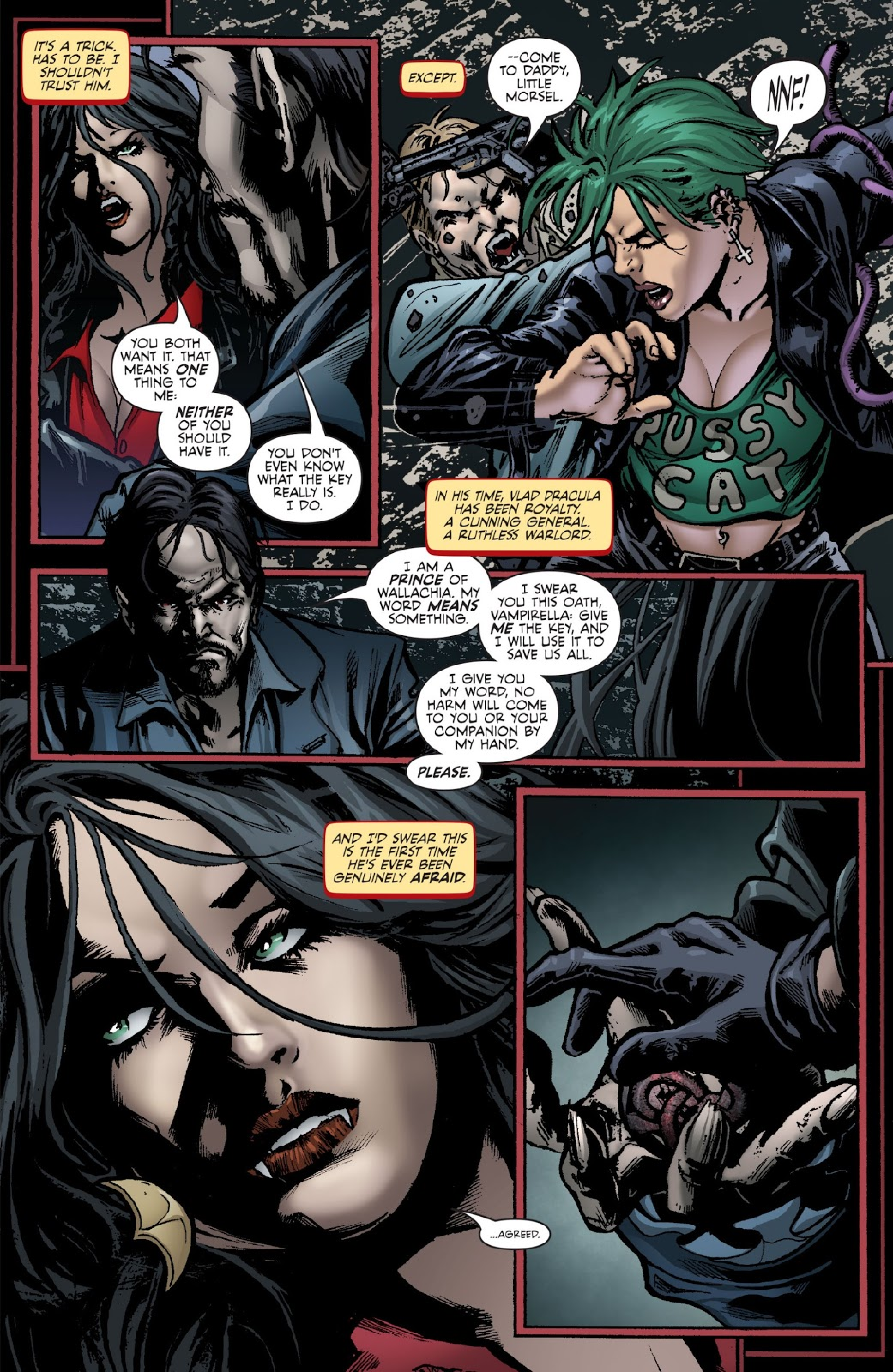

SEATTLE UNDERGROUND
CONSUMED WITH RAGE, BURNING WITH HUNGER, FOR BLOOD, FOR THE PLEASURE OF THEIR MISTRESS.
QUICKLY, MES ENFANTS
OUR "MASTER" AWAITS US.
AS DOES THE THIEF, THE SALOPE, VAMPIRELLA.
I WOULD SEE HER SUFFER, CHILDREN.
I WOULD SEE HER WEEP.
LE FANU, ONCE A FAVORITE OF DRACULA. NOW, EAGER TO SEE HER ONCE-BELOVED LEADER BOW BEFORE HER.
SHE HAD BEEN A POWERFUL VAMPIRE, A QUEEN IN DRACULA'S BLOOD-DRENCHED COURT.
NOW, SOMETHING...OTHER. SOMETHING PERVERSE AND TWISTED, WRENCHED OUT OF SHAPE BY CONTACT WITH AN ANCIENT, TERRIBLE ARTIFACT.
Juan

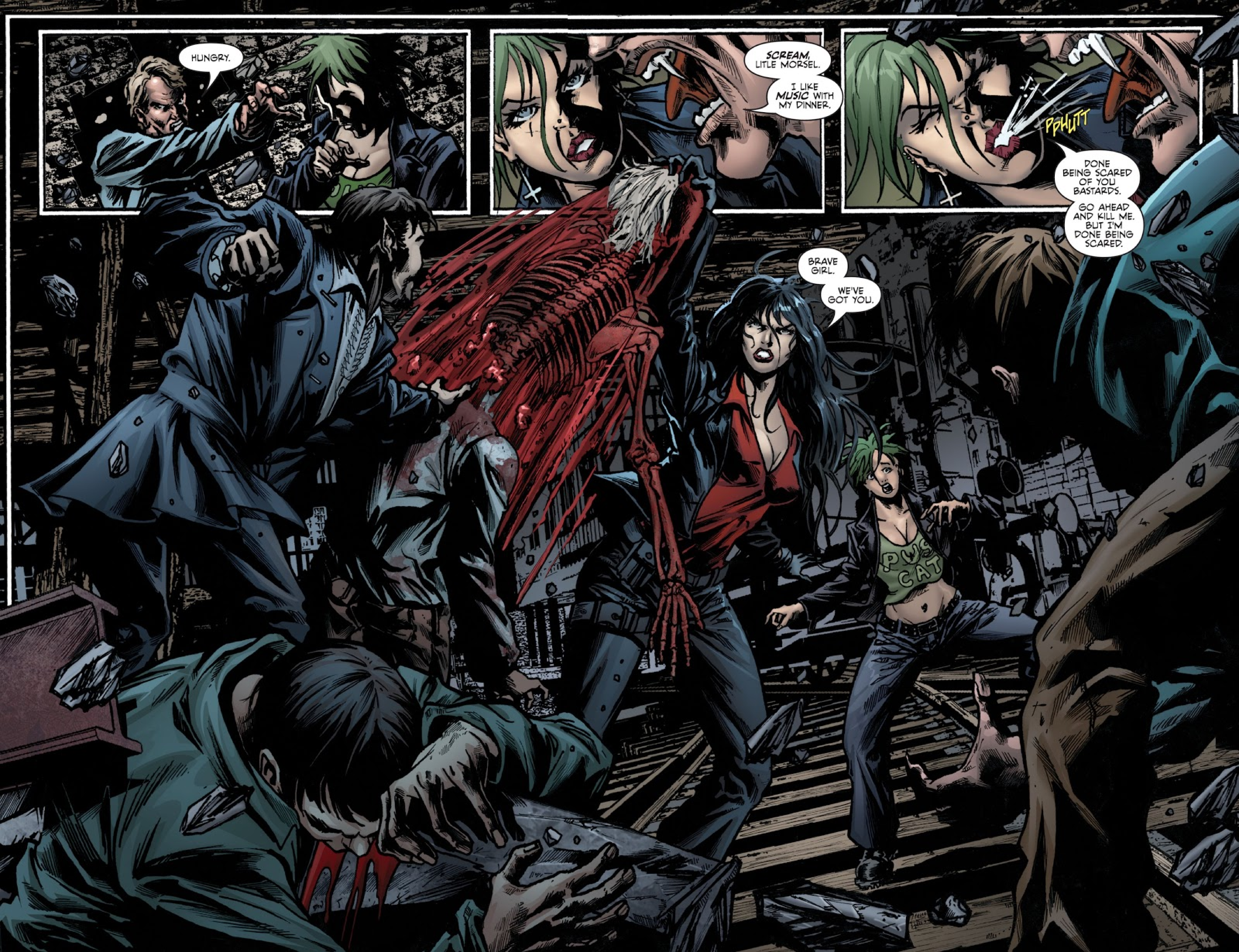

SOME PEOPLE JUST CARRY A GRUDGE.
BULLETS, VAMPIRELLA? YOU REALLY THINK THAT'LL STOP ME?
HELL'S *DEPTHS,* THAT *BURNS.*
BLESSED SILVER IN THE BULLETS, VLAD.
A GIFT FROM THE VATICAN.
AN ANNOYANCE, NOTHING MORE.
YOU *KNOW* ME. YOU KNOW WHAT I *AM.* IT'LL TAKE MORE THAN BULLETS TO KILL ME.
AND YOU'RE *ALL OUT* OF BULLETS NOW.
I AM.
MY FRIEND, ON THE OTHER HAND...

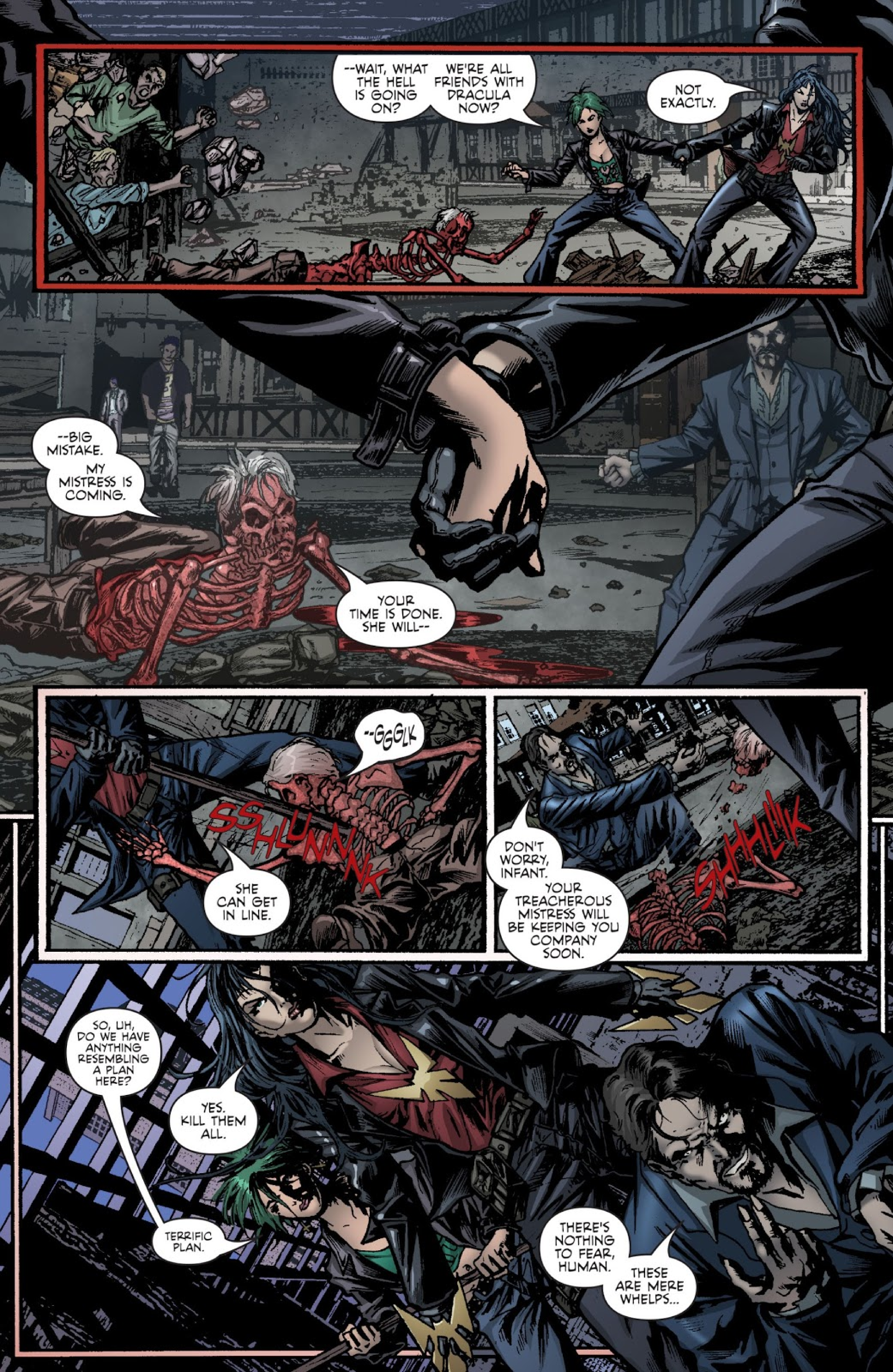

HEY! VLAD!
?
BIG FAN OF THE WHOLE *VAMPIRE* THING. BUT I'VE GOTTA TELL YOU, IN PERSON...
...YOU DON'T LIVE UP TO THE *HYPE*.
BLAM
NNGH!
IDIOTS.
YOU'RE MAKING A *MISTAKE*.
WE ARE *ALL* RUNNING OUT OF *TIME*--

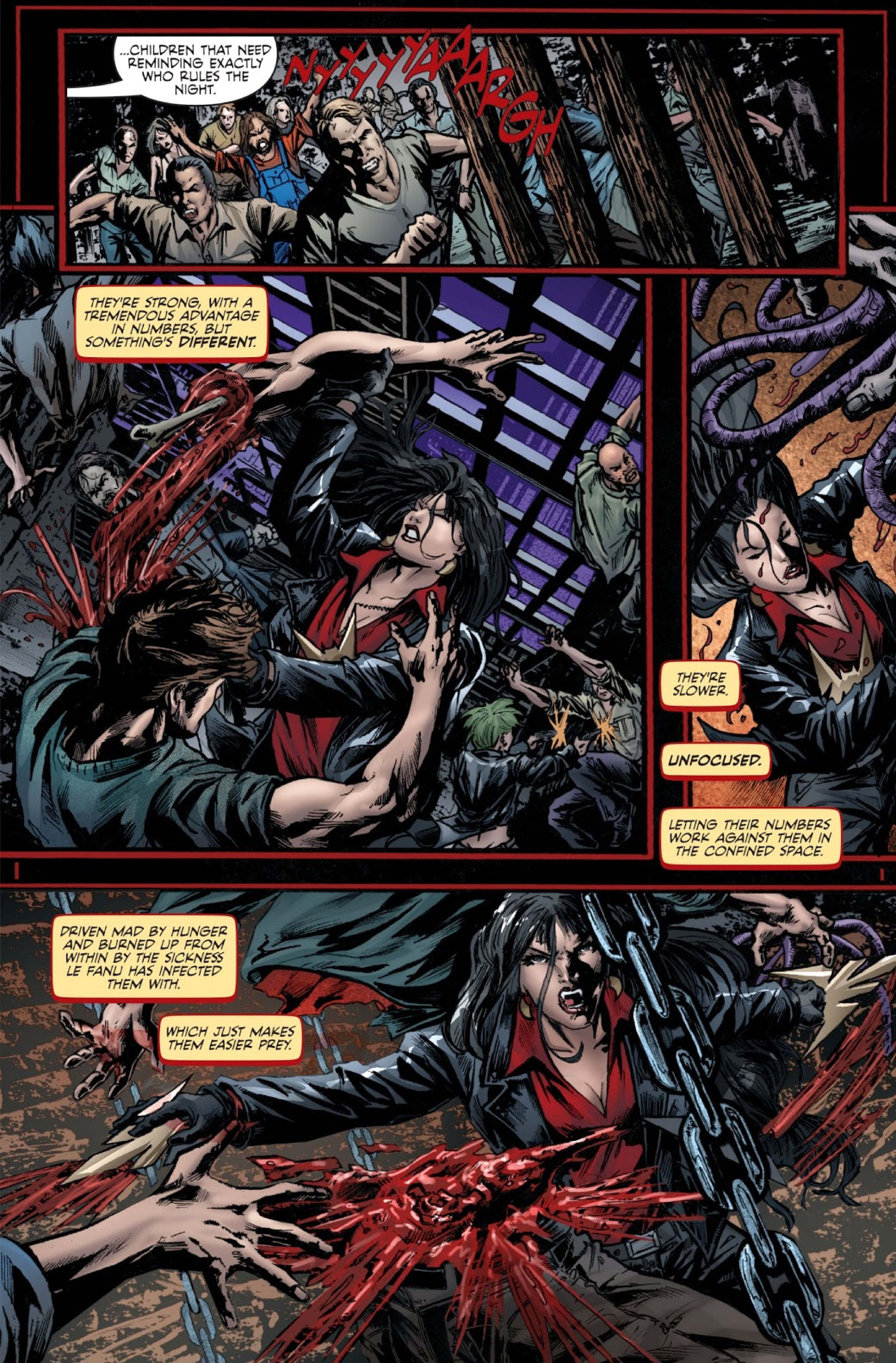

TO RID THIS WORLD OF *YOU*, YOU UTTER BASTARD, I WILL *MAKE* THE TIME.
THIS SO-CALLED APOCALYPSE WE FACE?
YOU BROUGHT IT DOWN ON US. NOW YOU WANT ME TO HELP YOU CLEAN UP *YOUR* MESS?
WHUDD
DAMN YOU, **LISTEN TO ME.**
LE FANU IS **COMING!**
SHE AND HER BASTARD CHILDREN SERVE A POWER SO GREAT IT WILL **DEVOUR** ALL LIFE!
ALL OF IT! EVERYWHERE!

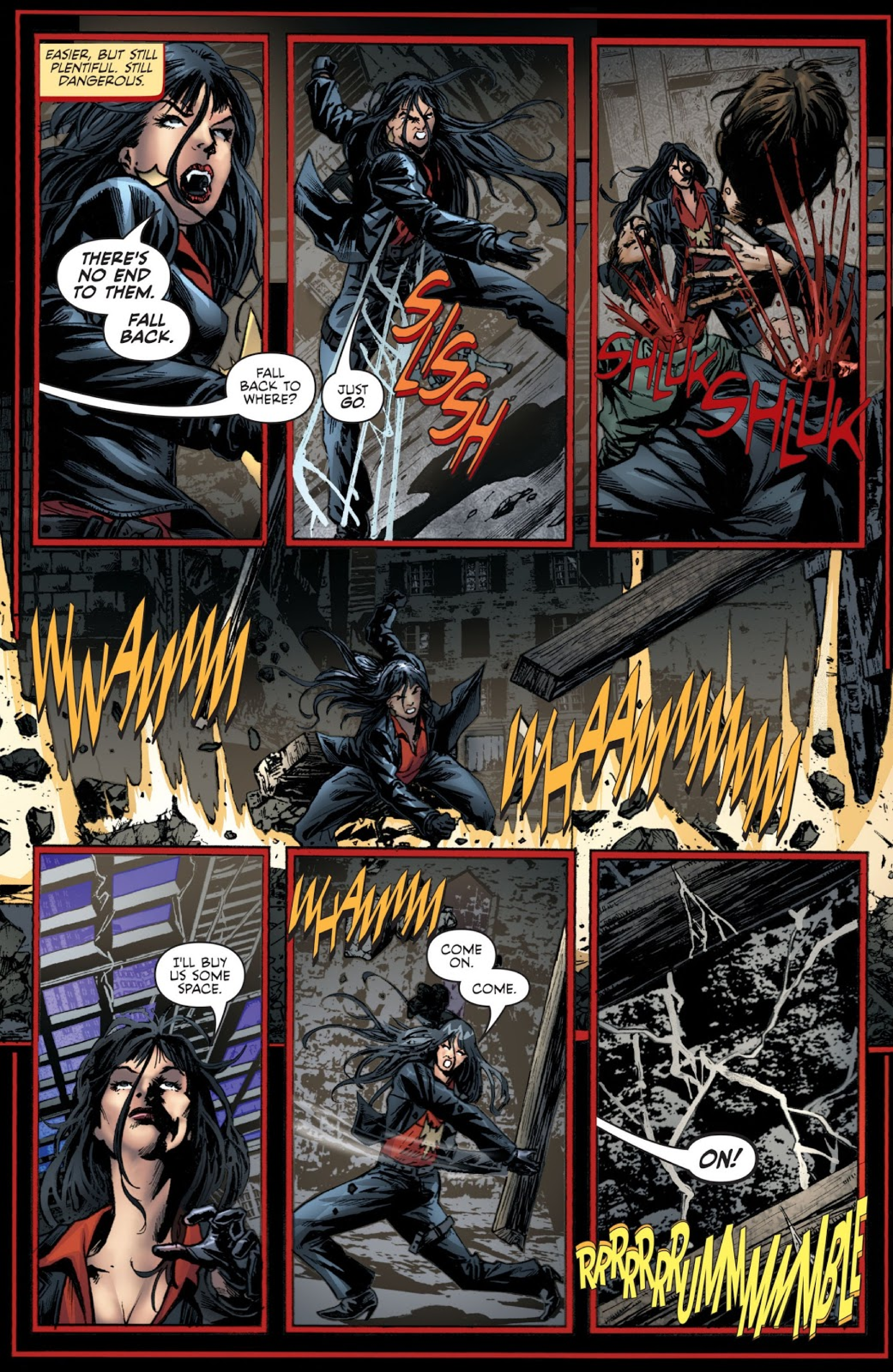

WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING HERE, SOFIA?
YOU JUST SHOT *DRACULA*.
CRAZY. YOU JUST SHOT DRACULA IN THE *FACE*--
--AAAGH!
V! THEY'RE HERE!
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM
SOFIA!
KKKRASH
THERE'S NO MORE TIME, VAMPIRELLA.
LE FANU IS ***HERE***, AND SHE WILL KILL YOUR PET HUMAN, TEAR OUT YOUR HEART, AND CAST ***ALL OF US*** INTO THE ***ABYSS***.
UNLESS YOU GIVE ME ***THE KEY***.
THE KEY. THE STONE ARTIFACT I CAPTURED FROM LE FANU.

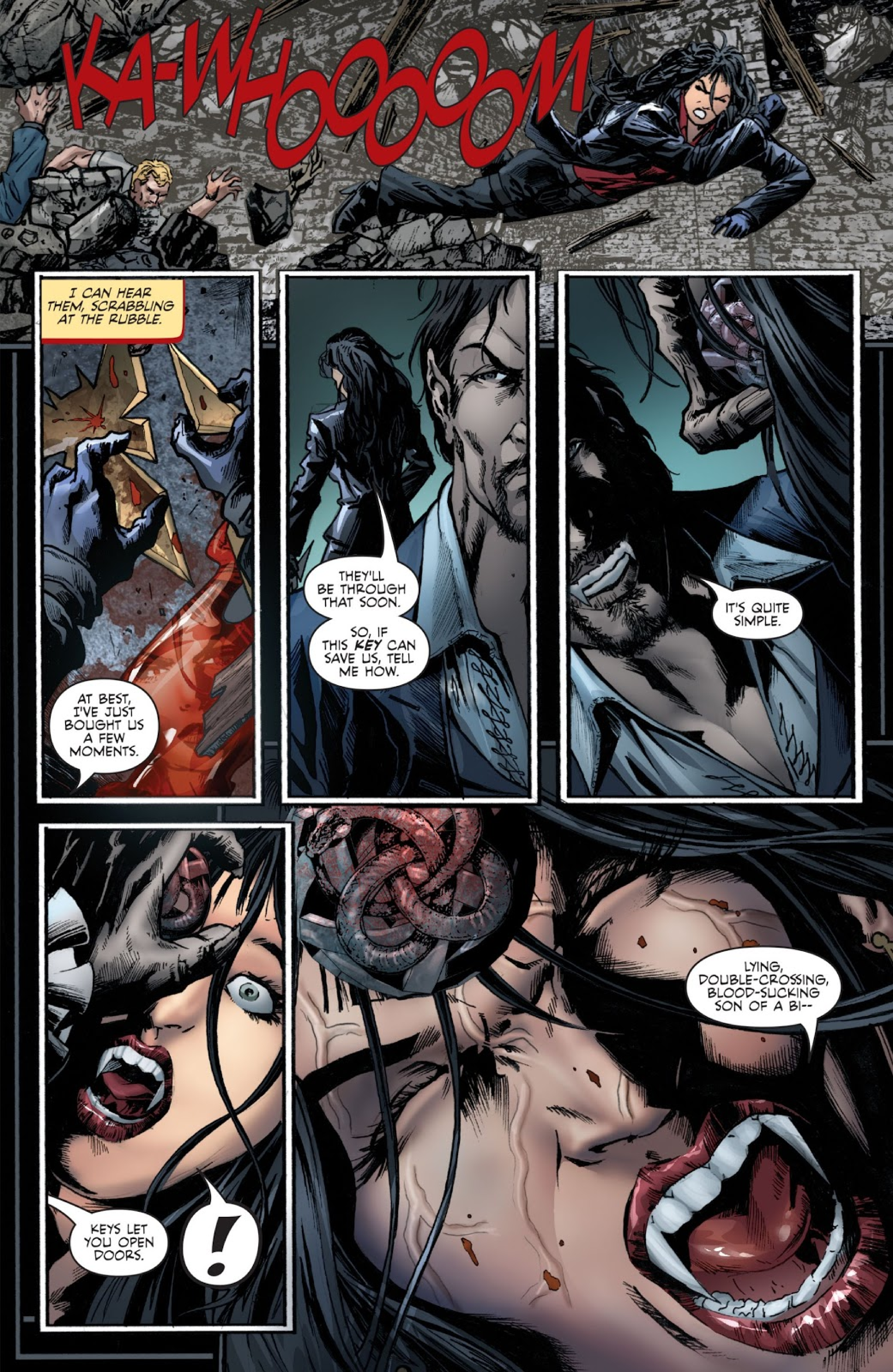

IT'S A TRICK. HAS TO BE. I SHOULDN'T TRUST HIM.
YOU BOTH WANT IT. THAT MEANS *ONE* THING TO ME: ***NEITHER*** OF YOU SHOULD HAVE IT.
YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THE KEY REALLY IS. I DO.
EXCEPT.
--COME TO DADDY, LITTLE MORSEL.
NNF!
PUSSY CAT
IN HIS TIME, VLAD DRACULA HAS BEEN ROYALTY. A CUNNING GENERAL. A RUTHLESS WARLORD.
I AM A ***PRINCE*** OF WALLACHIA. MY WORD ***MEANS*** SOMETHING.
I SWEAR YOU THIS OATH, VAMPIRELLA: GIVE ***ME*** THE KEY, AND I WILL USE IT TO SAVE US ALL.
I GIVE YOU MY WORD, NO HARM WILL COME TO YOU OR YOUR COMPANION BY MY HAND.
PLEASE.
AND I'D SWEAR THIS IS THE FIRST TIME HE'S EVER BEEN GENUINELY ***AFRAID***.
...AGREED.

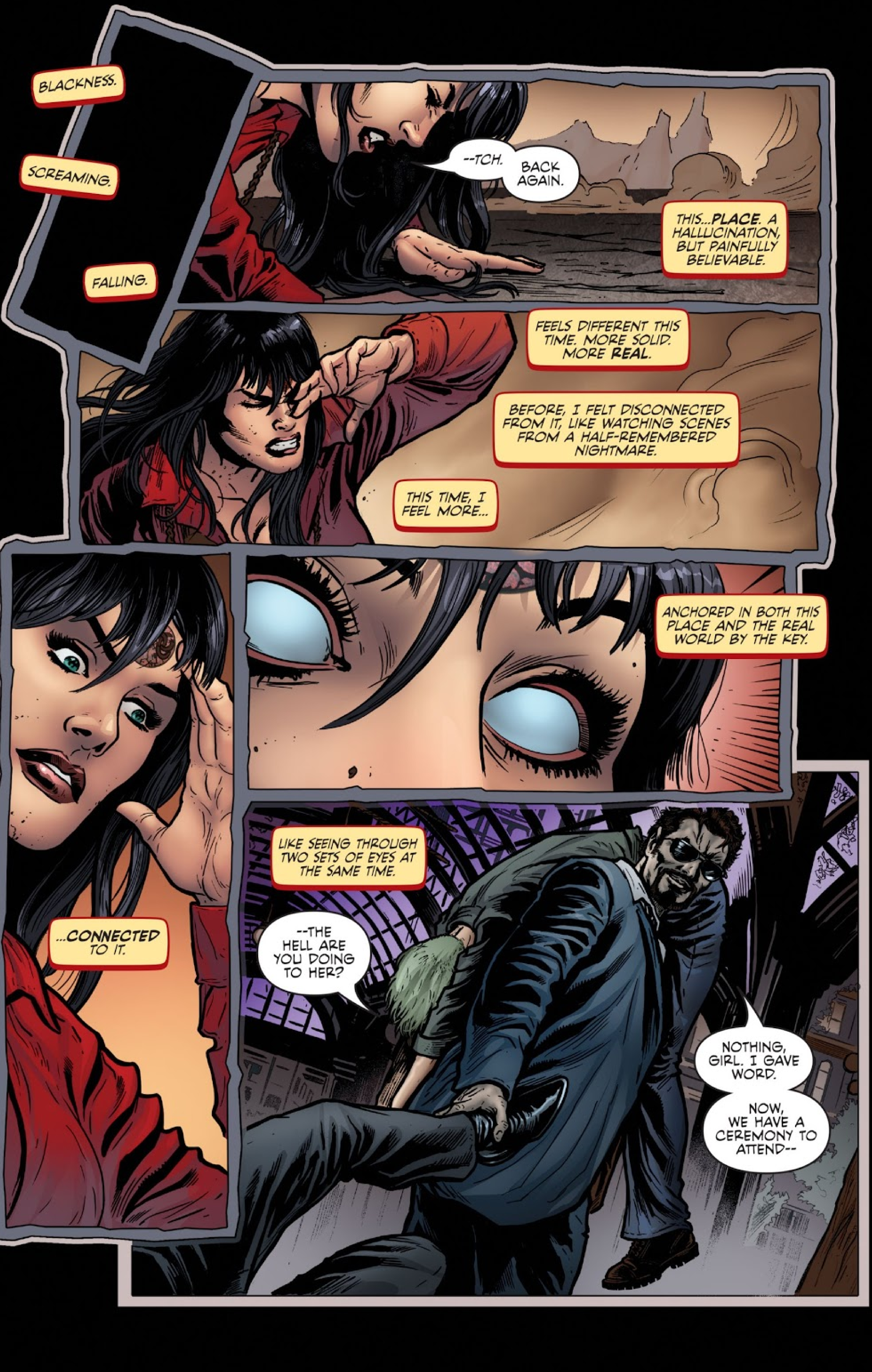

HUNGRY.
SCREAM, LITLE MORSEL.
I LIKE MUSIC WITH MY DINNER.
PPHUTT
DONE BEING SCARED OF YOU BASTARDS.
GO AHEAD AND KILL ME. BUT I'M DONE BEING SCARED.
BRAVE GIRL.
WE'VE GOT YOU.

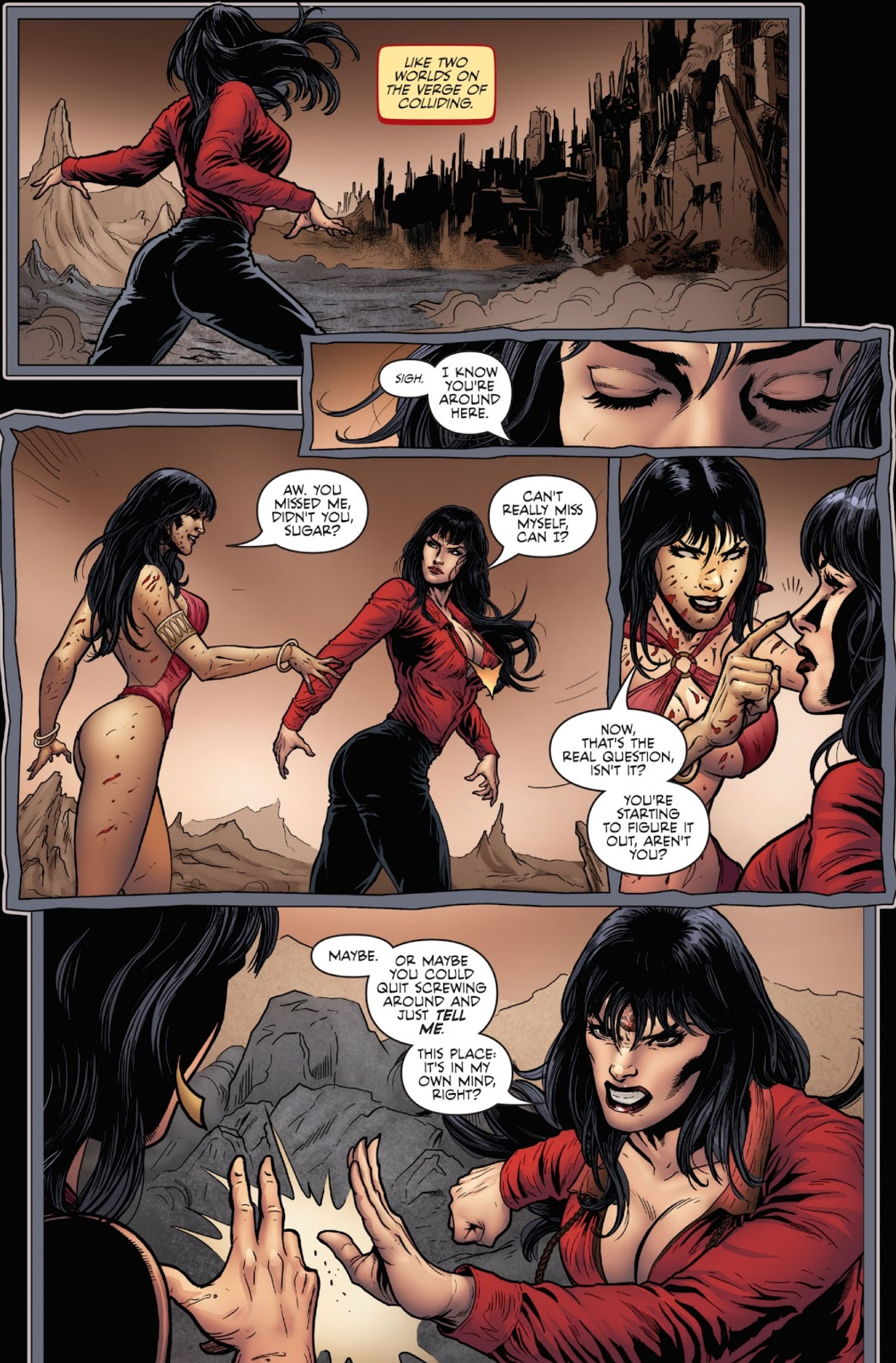

--WAIT, WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?
WE'RE ALL FRIENDS WITH DRACULA NOW?
NOT EXACTLY.
--BIG MISTAKE.
MY MISTRESS IS COMING.
YOUR TIME IS DONE. SHE WILL--
--GGGLK
SSHLUNNNNK
SHE CAN GET IN LINE.
DON'T WORRY, INFANT.
YOUR TREACHEROUS MISTRESS WILL BE KEEPING YOU COMPANY SOON.
SHHHLIIIK
SO, UH, DO WE HAVE ANYTHING RESEMBLING A PLAN HERE?
YES. KILL THEM ALL.
TERRIFIC PLAN.
THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR, HUMAN.
THESE ARE MERE WHELPS...

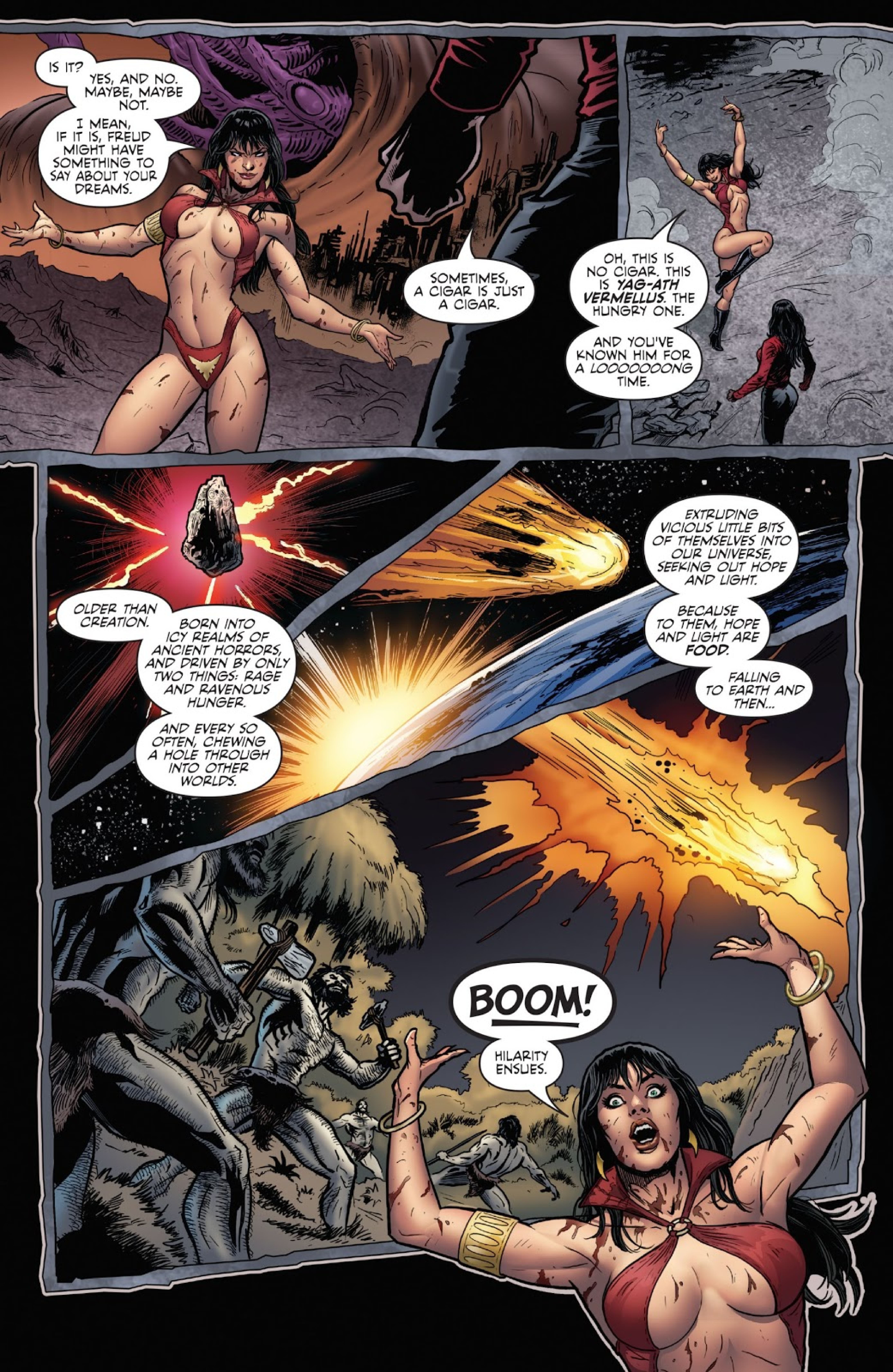

...CHILDREN THAT NEED REMINDING EXACTLY WHO RULES THE NIGHT.
NYYYYYAAAARGH
THEY'RE STRONG, WITH A TREMENDOUS ADVANTAGE IN NUMBERS, BUT SOMETHING'S **DIFFERENT**.
THEY'RE SLOWER.
UNFOCUSED.
LETTING THEIR NUMBERS WORK AGAINST THEM IN THE CONFINED SPACE.
DRIVEN MAD BY HUNGER AND BURNED UP FROM WITHIN BY THE SICKNESS LE FANU HAS INFECTED THEM WITH.
WHICH JUST MAKES THEM EASIER PREY.

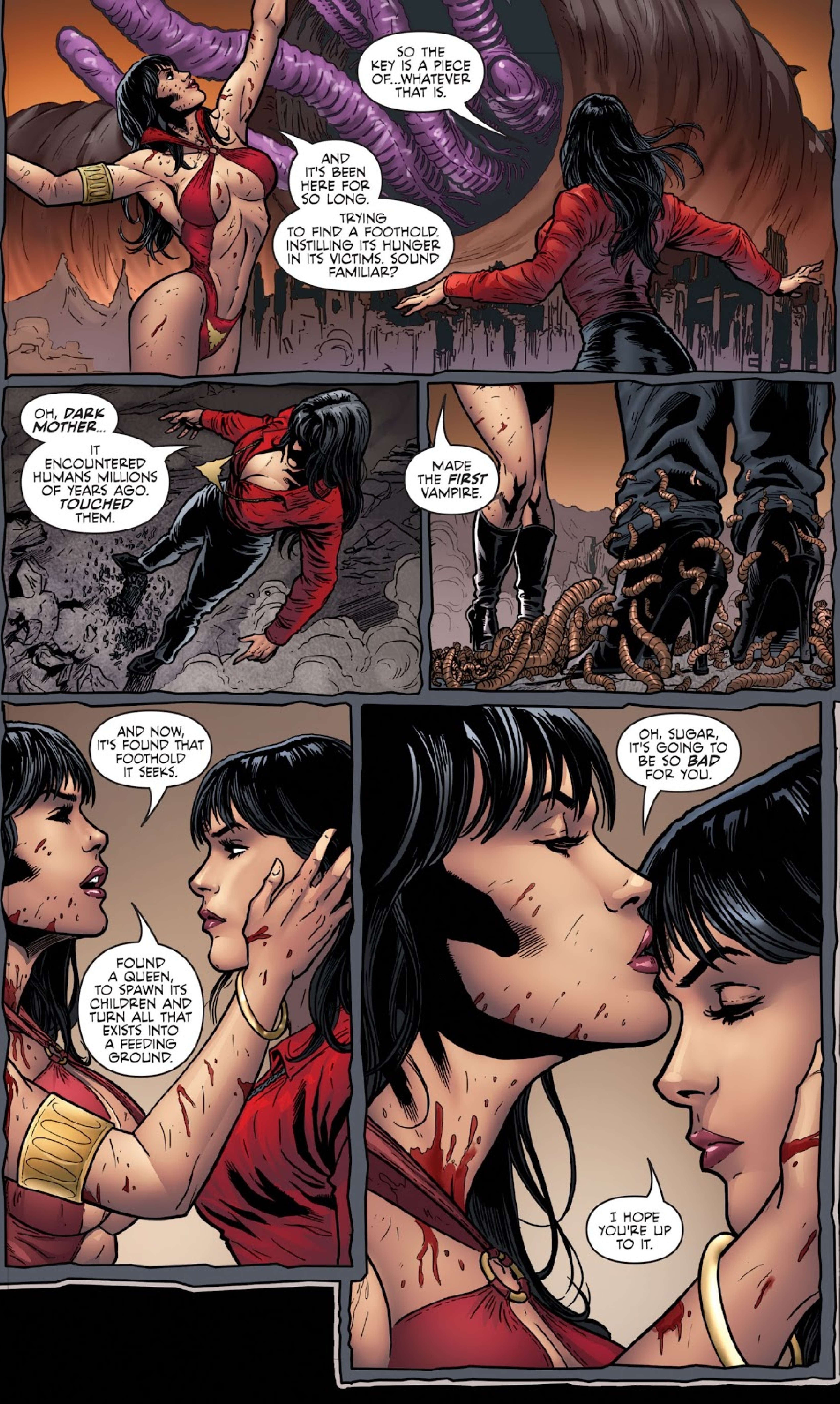

EASIER, BUT STILL PLENTIFUL. STILL DANGEROUS.
THERE'S NO END TO THEM.
FALL BACK.
FALL BACK TO WHERE?
JUST GO.
SLISSH
SHLUK
SHLUK
WWAMM
WHAAMMMMM
I'LL BUY US SOME SPACE.
WHAMM
COME ON.
COME.
ON!
RRRRRRRUMMMMMBLE

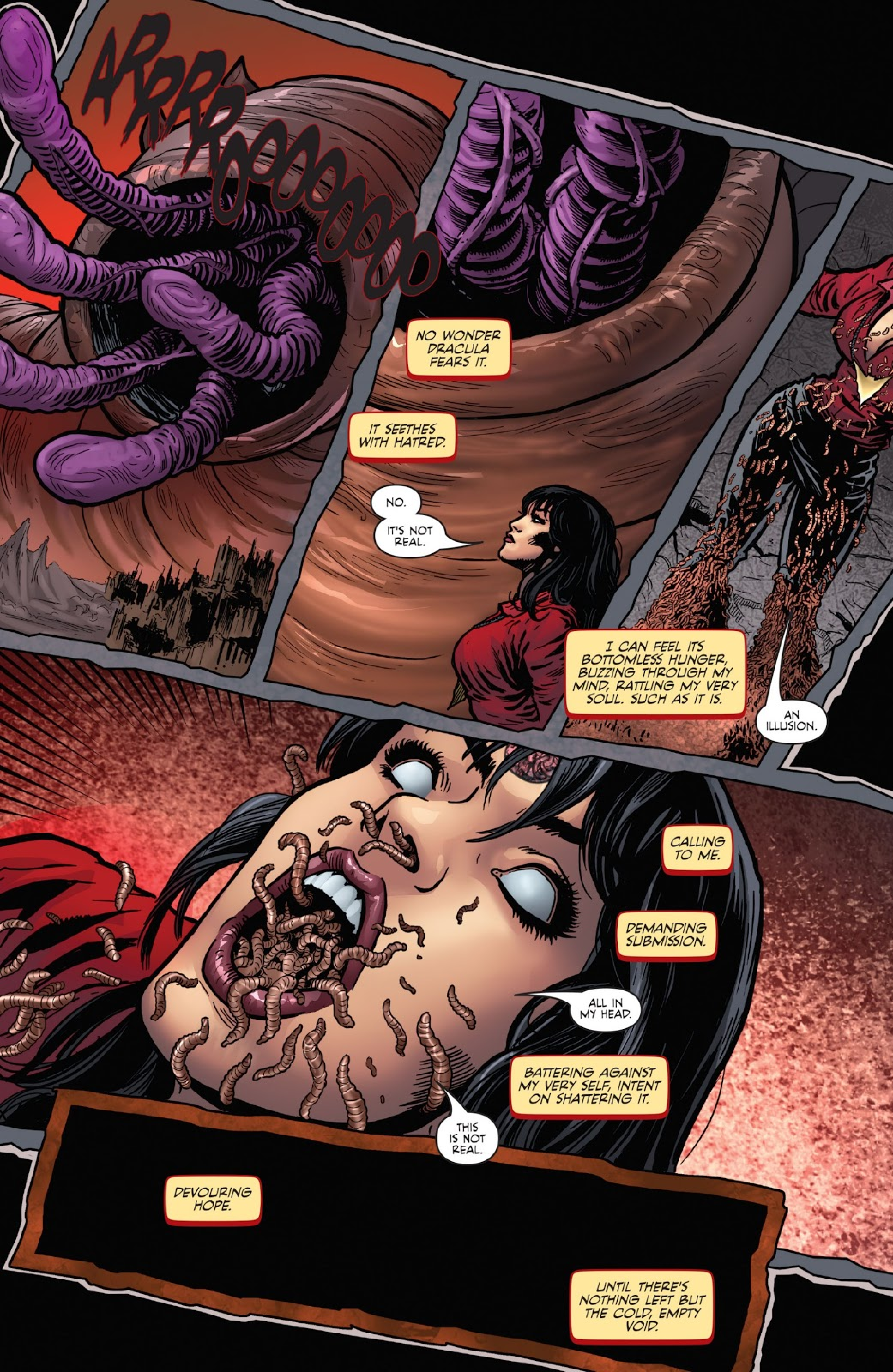

KA-WHOOOOOM
I CAN HEAR THEM, SCRABBLING AT THE RUBBLE.
AT BEST, I'VE JUST BOUGHT US A FEW MOMENTS.
THEY'LL BE THROUGH THAT SOON.
SO, IF THIS *KEY* CAN SAVE US, TELL ME HOW.
IT'S QUITE SIMPLE.
KEYS LET YOU OPEN DOORS.
!
LYING, DOUBLE-CROSSING, BLOOD-SUCKING SON OF A BI--

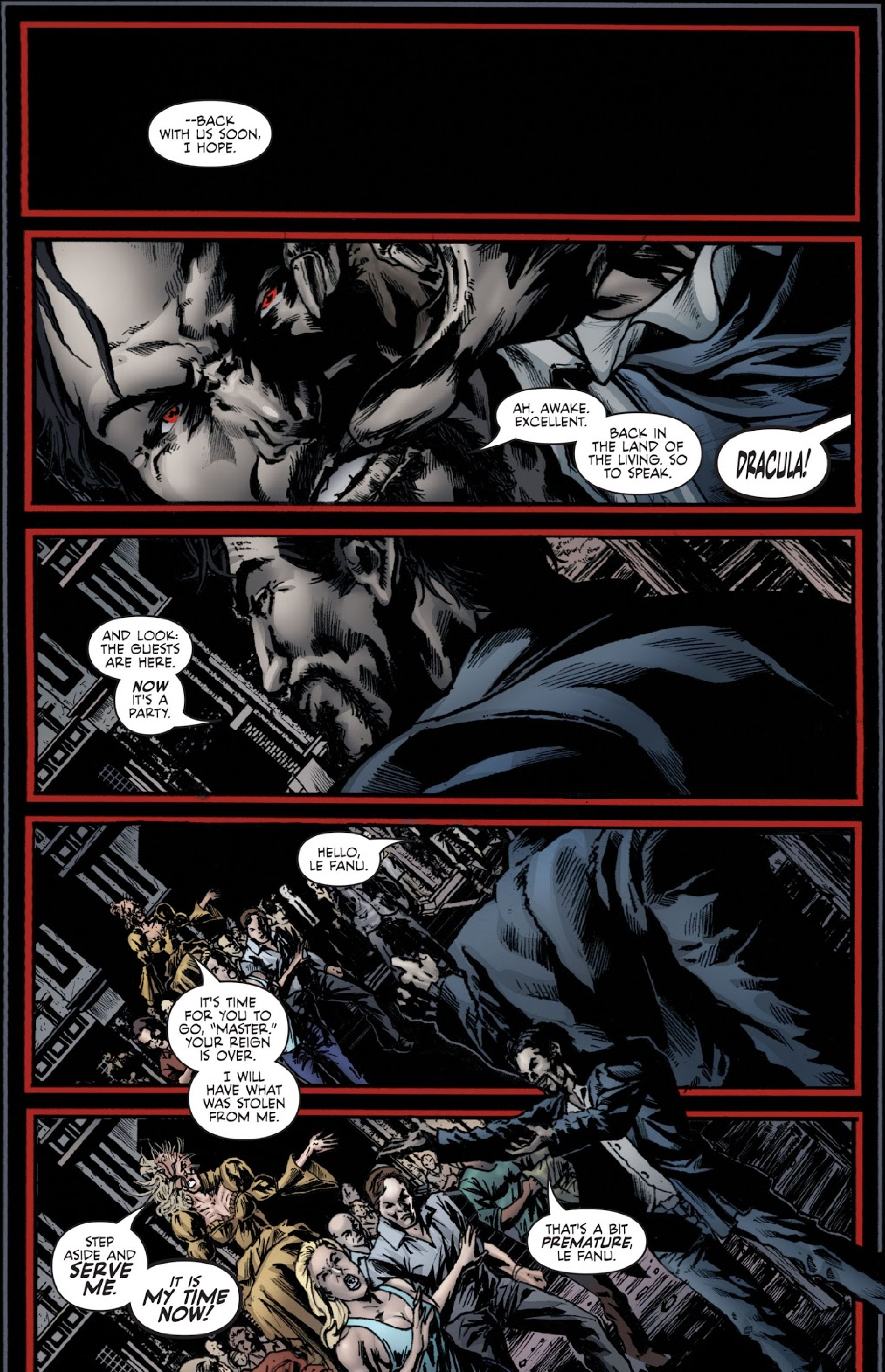

BLACKNESS.
SCREAMING.
FALLING.
--TCH.
BACK AGAIN.
THIS...**PLACE**. A HALLUCINATION, BUT PAINFULLY BELIEVABLE.
FEELS DIFFERENT THIS TIME. MORE SOLID. MORE **REAL**.
BEFORE, I FELT DISCONNECTED FROM IT, LIKE WATCHING SCENES FROM A HALF-REMEMBERED NIGHTMARE.
THIS TIME, I FEEL MORE...
...**CONNECTED** TO IT.
ANCHORED IN BOTH THIS PLACE AND THE REAL WORLD BY THE KEY.
LIKE SEEING THROUGH TWO SETS OF EYES AT THE SAME TIME.
--THE HELL ARE YOU DOING TO HER?
NOTHING, GIRL. I GAVE WORD.
NOW, WE HAVE A CEREMONY TO ATTEND--

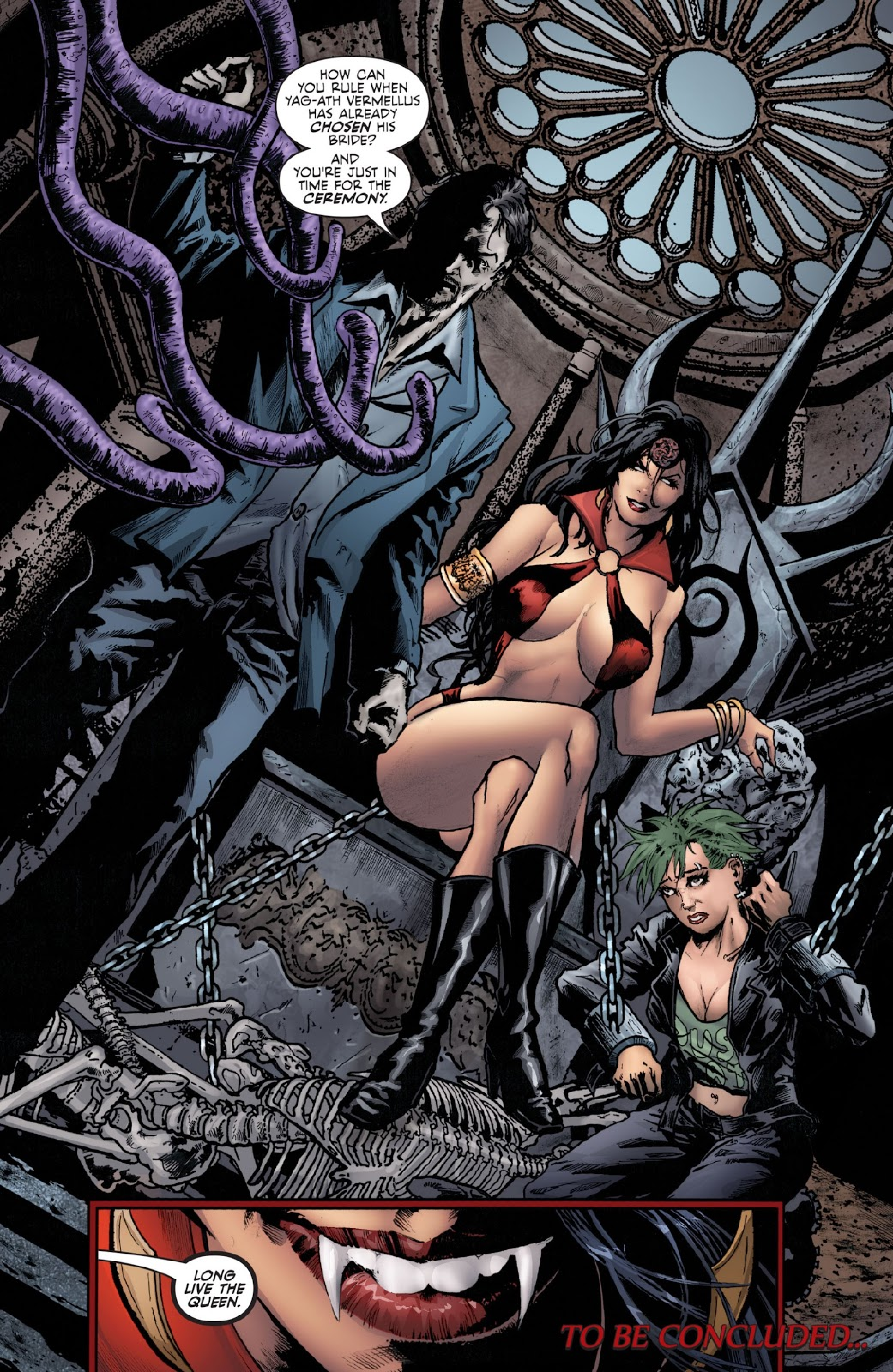

LIKE TWO WORLDS ON THE VERGE OF COLLIDING.
SIGH.
I KNOW YOU'RE AROUND HERE.
AW. YOU MISSED ME, DIDN'T YOU, SUGAR?
CAN'T REALLY MISS MYSELF, CAN I?
NOW, THAT'S THE REAL QUESTION, ISN'T IT?
YOU'RE STARTING TO FIGURE IT OUT, AREN'T YOU?
MAYBE.
OR MAYBE YOU COULD QUIT SCREWING AROUND AND JUST *TELL ME*.
THIS PLACE: IT'S IN MY OWN MIND, RIGHT?


IS IT?
YES, AND NO. MAYBE, MAYBE NOT.
I MEAN, IF IT IS, FREUD MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT YOUR DREAMS.
SOMETIMES, A CIGAR IS JUST A CIGAR.
OH, THIS IS NO CIGAR. THIS IS ***YAG-ATH VERMELLUS***. THE HUNGRY ONE.
AND YOU'VE KNOWN HIM FOR A *LOOOOOOONG* TIME.
OLDER THAN CREATION.
BORN INTO ICY REALMS OF ANCIENT HORRORS, AND DRIVEN BY ONLY TWO THINGS: RAGE AND RAVENOUS HUNGER.
AND EVERY SO OFTEN, CHEWING A HOLE THROUGH INTO OTHER WORLDS.
EXTRUDING VICIOUS LITTLE BITS OF THEMSELVES INTO OUR UNIVERSE, SEEKING OUT HOPE AND LIGHT.
BECAUSE TO THEM, HOPE AND LIGHT ARE ***FOOD***.
FALLING TO EARTH AND THEN...
BOOM!
HILARITY ENSUES.

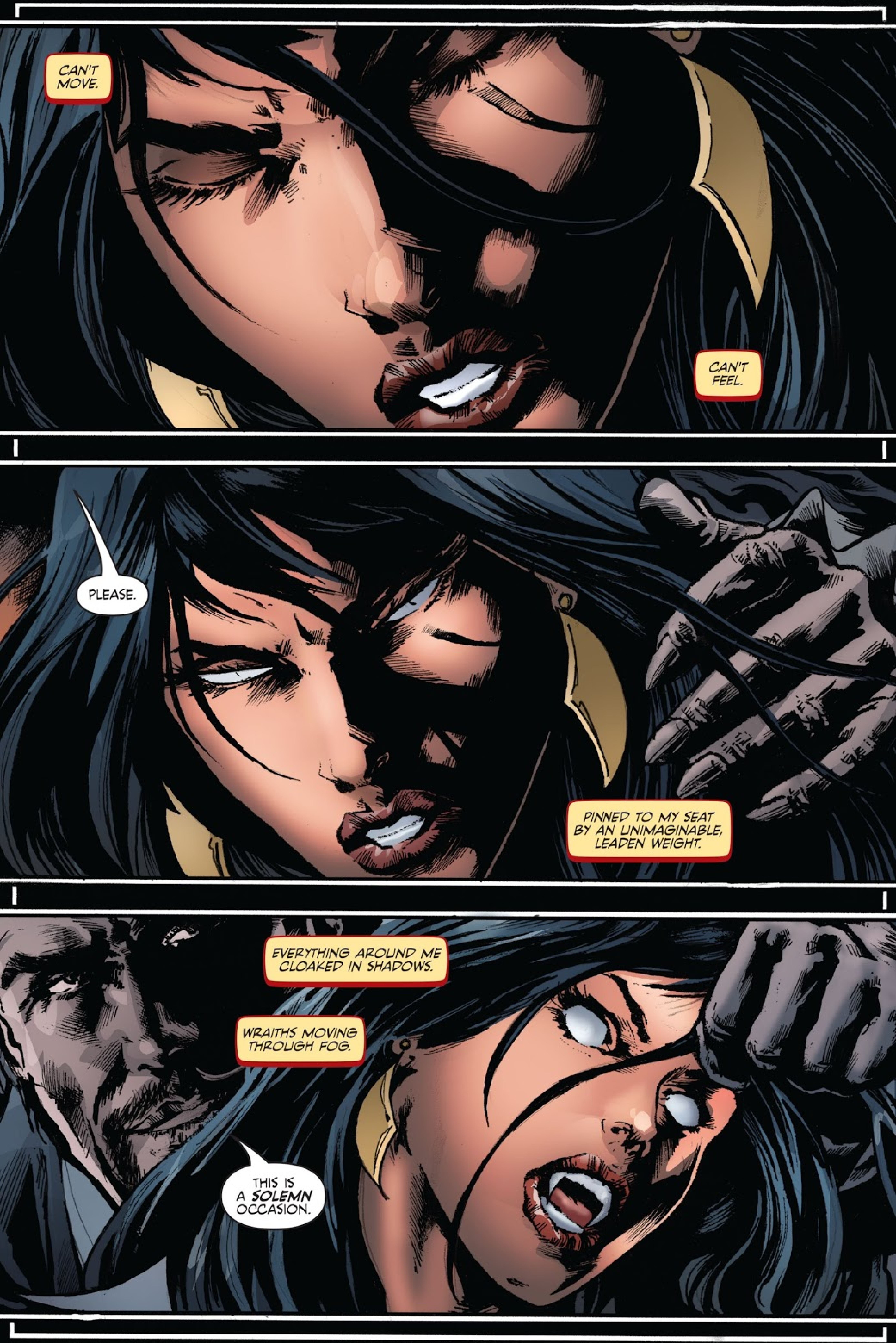

SO THE KEY IS A PIECE OF...WHATEVER THAT IS.
AND IT'S BEEN HERE FOR SO LONG.
TRYING TO FIND A FOOTHOLD. INSTILLING ITS HUNGER IN ITS VICTIMS. SOUND FAMILIAR?
OH, *DARK MOTHER*...
IT ENCOUNTERED HUMANS MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO. *TOUCHED* THEM.
MADE THE *FIRST* VAMPIRE.
AND NOW, IT'S FOUND THAT FOOTHOLD IT SEEKS.
FOUND A QUEEN, TO SPAWN ITS CHILDREN AND TURN ALL THAT EXISTS INTO A FEEDING GROUND.
OH, SUGAR, IT'S GOING TO BE SO *BAD* FOR YOU.
I HOPE YOU'RE UP TO IT.

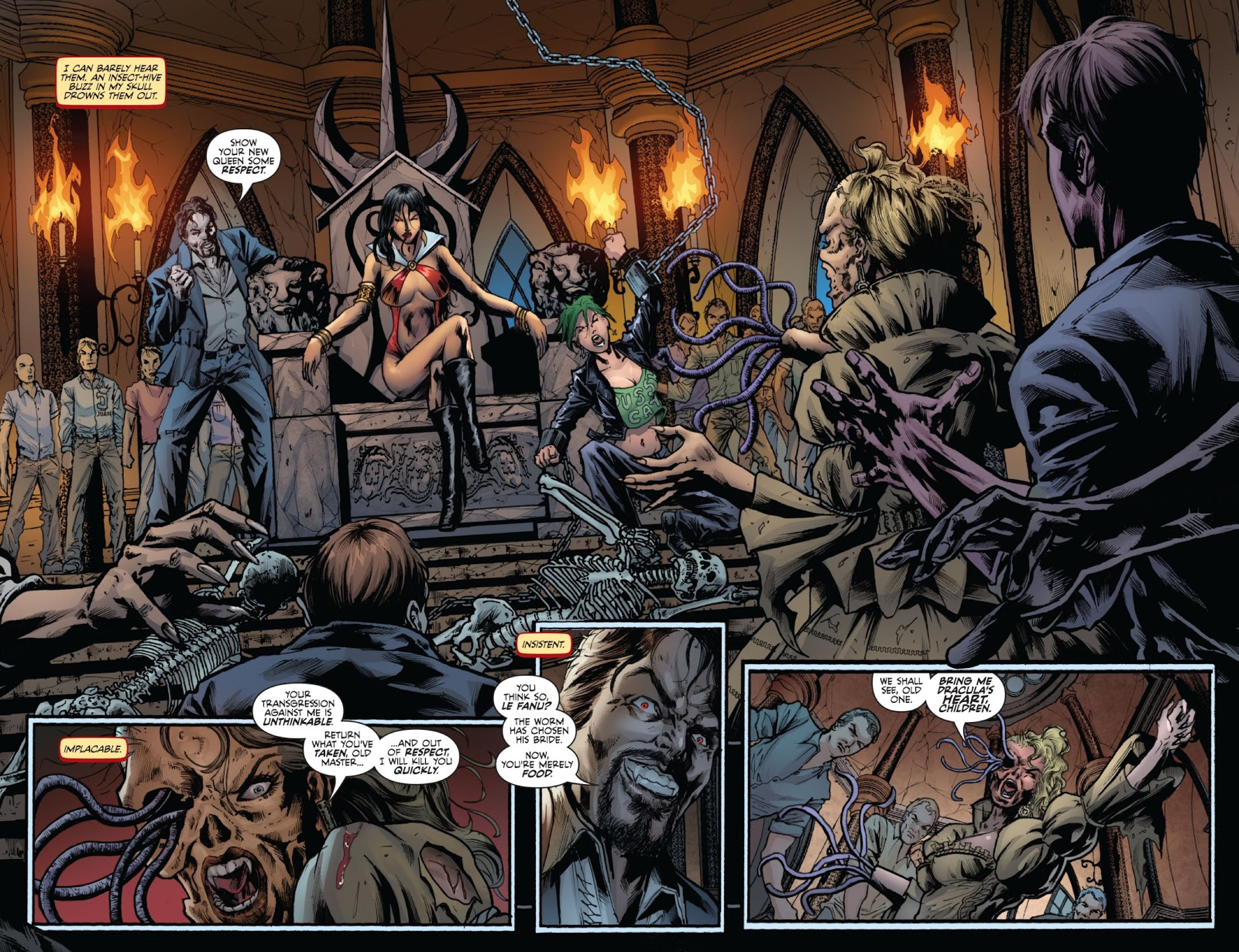

ARRROOOOOOOO
NO WONDER DRACULA FEARS IT.
IT SEETHES WITH HATRED.
NO.
IT'S NOT REAL.
I CAN FEEL ITS BOTTOMLESS HUNGER, BUZZING THROUGH MY MIND, RATTLING MY VERY SOUL. SUCH AS IT IS.
AN ILLUSION.
CALLING TO ME.
DEMANDING SUBMISSION.
ALL IN MY HEAD.
BATTERING AGAINST MY VERY SELF, INTENT ON SHATTERING IT.
THIS IS NOT REAL.
DEVOURING HOPE.
UNTIL THERE'S NOTHING LEFT BUT THE COLD, EMPTY VOID.

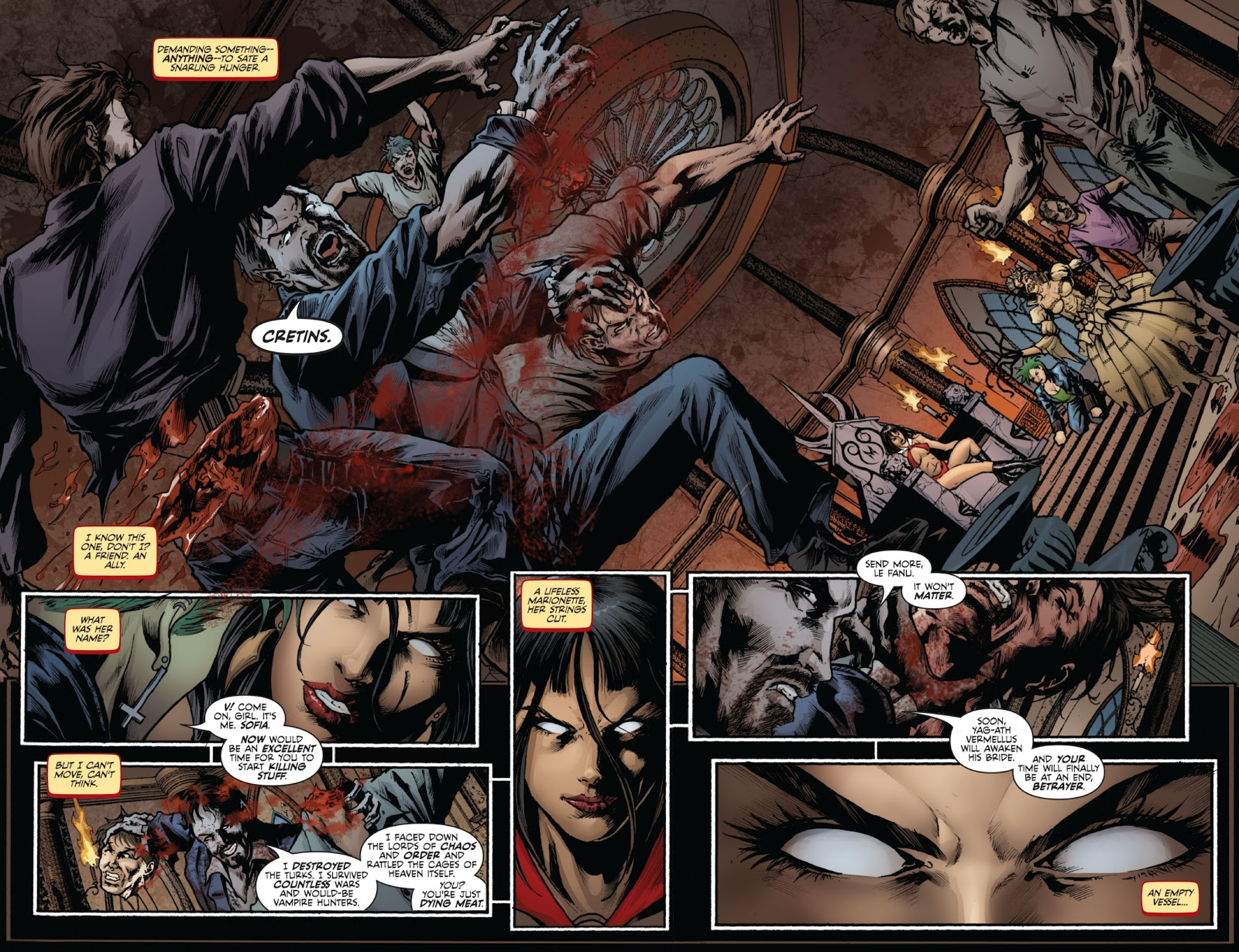

--BACK WITH US SOON, I HOPE.
AH. AWAKE. EXCELLENT.
BACK IN THE LAND OF THE LIVING. SO TO SPEAK.
DRACULA!
AND LOOK: THE GUESTS ARE HERE.
NOW IT'S A PARTY.
HELLO, LE FANU.
IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO GO, "MASTER." YOUR REIGN IS OVER.
I WILL HAVE WHAT WAS STOLEN FROM ME.
STEP ASIDE AND SERVE ME.
IT IS MY TIME NOW!
THAT'S A BIT PREMATURE, LE FANU.

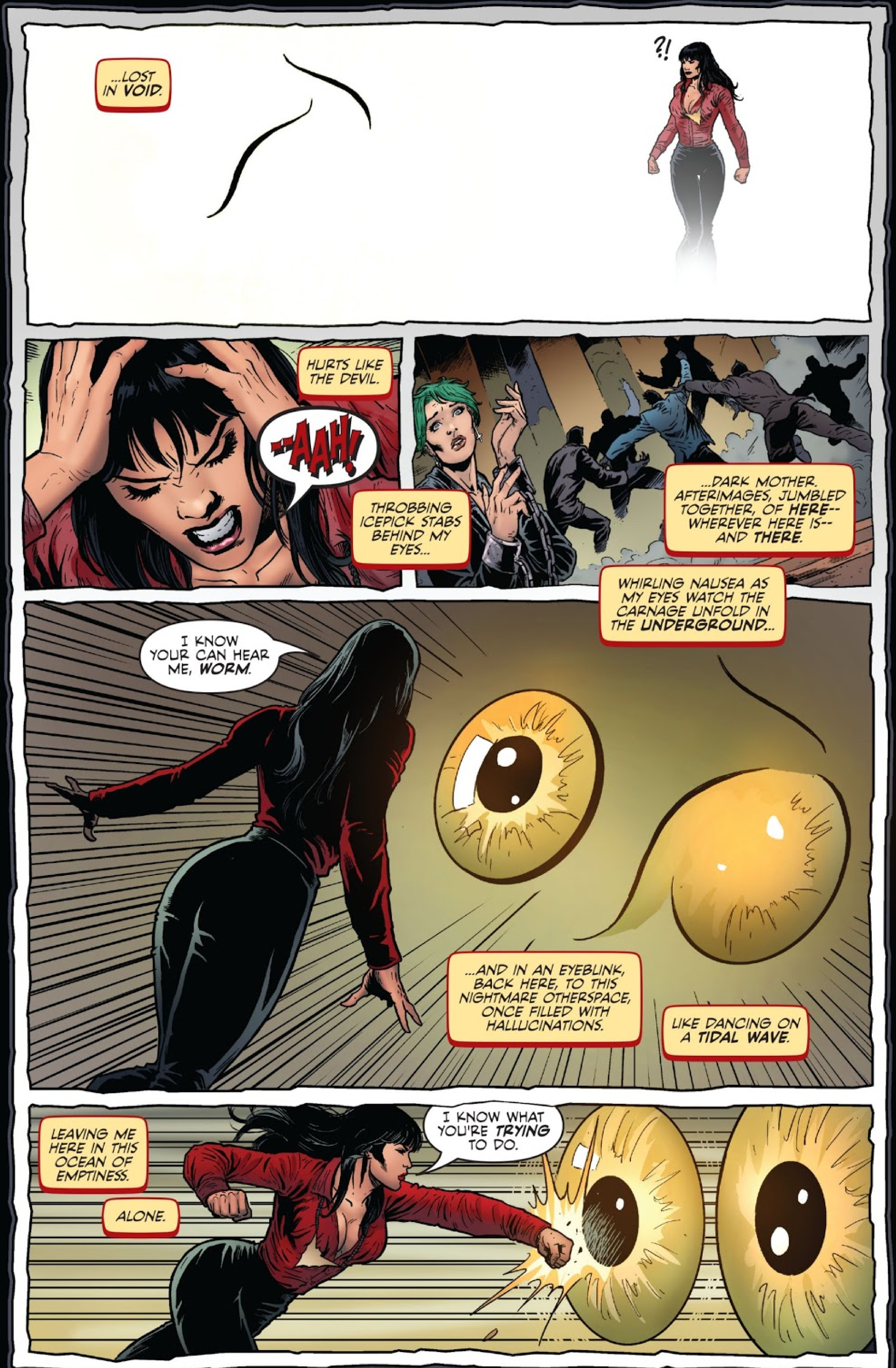

HOW CAN YOU RULE WHEN YAG-ATH VERMELLUS HAS ALREADY CHOSEN HIS BRIDE?
AND YOU'RE JUST IN TIME FOR THE CEREMONY.
LONG LIVE THE QUEEN.
TO BE CONCLUDED...

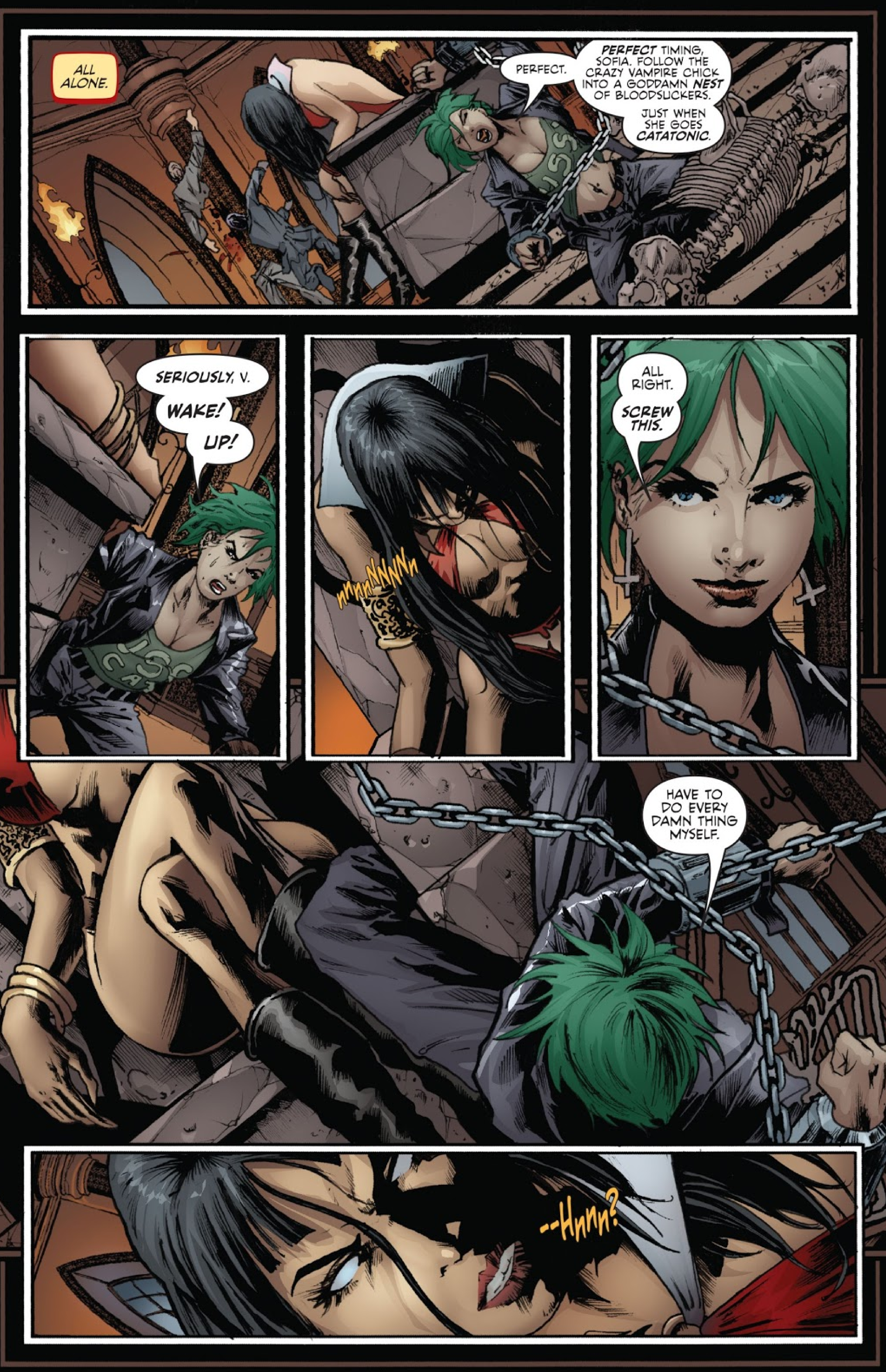
VAMPIRELLA®
DYNAMITE®
6
WWW.DYNAMITE.NET
RATED T+
$3.99 US

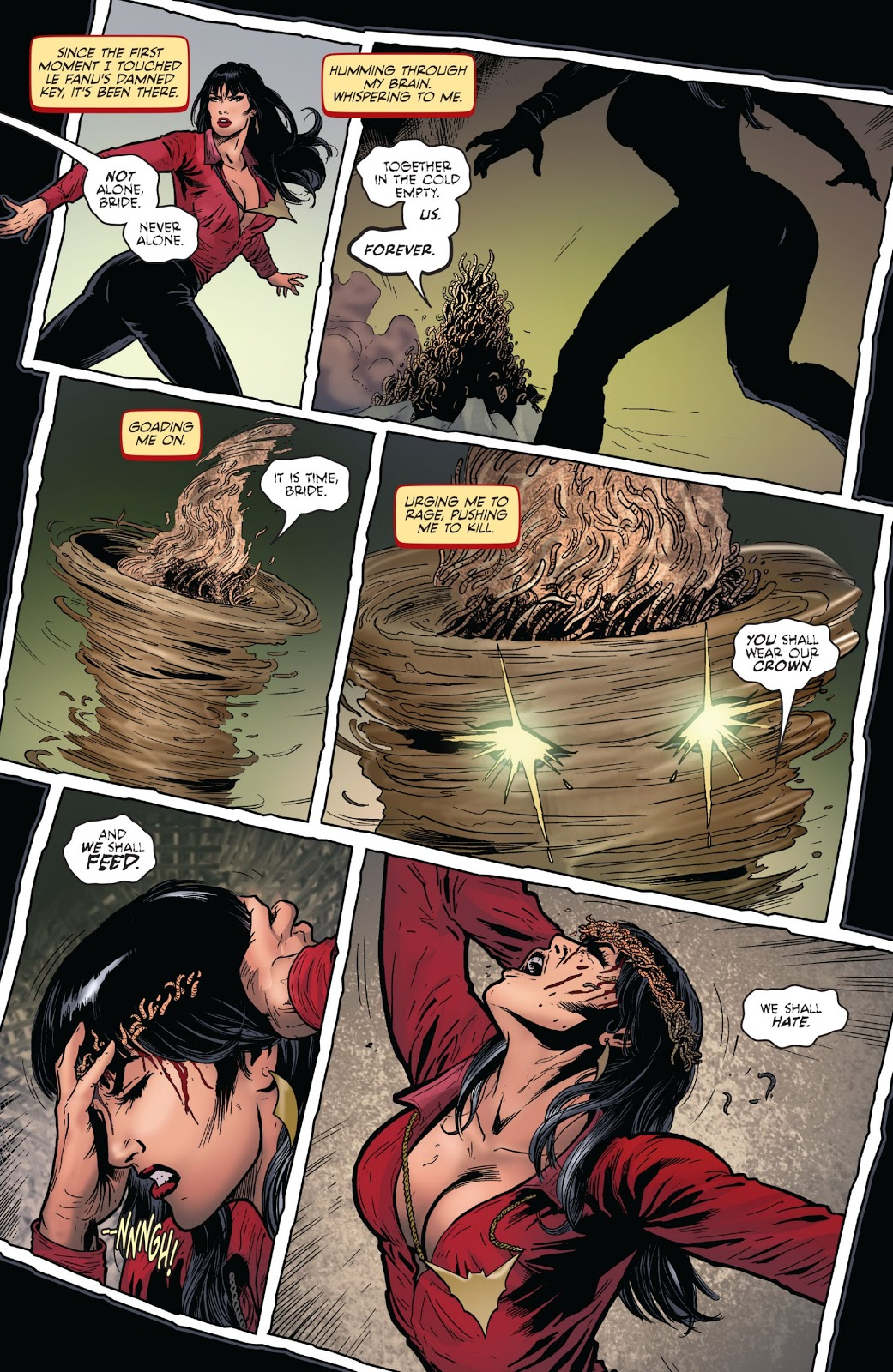

CAN'T MOVE.
CAN'T FEEL.
PLEASE.
PINNED TO MY SEAT BY AN UNIMAGINABLE, LEADEN WEIGHT.
EVERYTHING AROUND ME CLOAKED IN SHADOWS.
WRAITHS MOVING THROUGH FOG.
THIS IS A *SOLEMN* OCCASION.

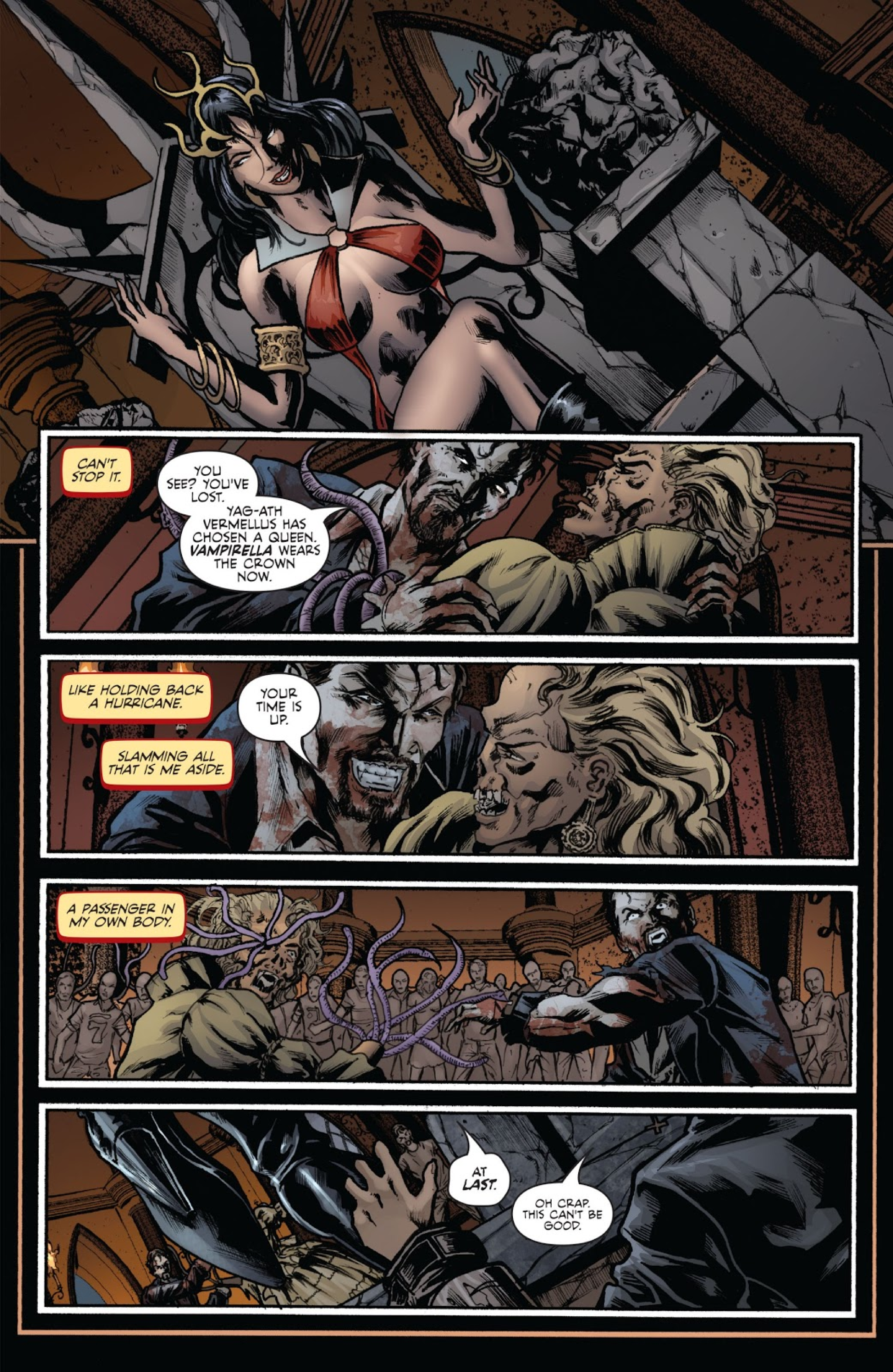

I CAN BARELY HEAR THEM. AN INSECT-HIVE BUZZ IN MY SKULL DROWNS THEM OUT.
SHOW YOUR NEW QUEEN SOME *RESPECT.*
JUAN
IMPLACABLE.
YOUR TRANSGRESSION AGAINST ME IS *UNTHINKABLE.*
RETURN WHAT YOU'VE *TAKEN,* OLD MASTER...
...AND OUT OF *RESPECT,* I WILL KILL YOU *QUICKLY.*
INSISTENT.
YOU THINK SO, *LE FANU?*
THE WORM HAS CHOSEN HIS BRIDE.
NOW, YOU'RE MERELY *FOOD.*
WE SHALL SEE, OLD ONE.
BRING ME DRACULA'S HEART, CHILDREN.

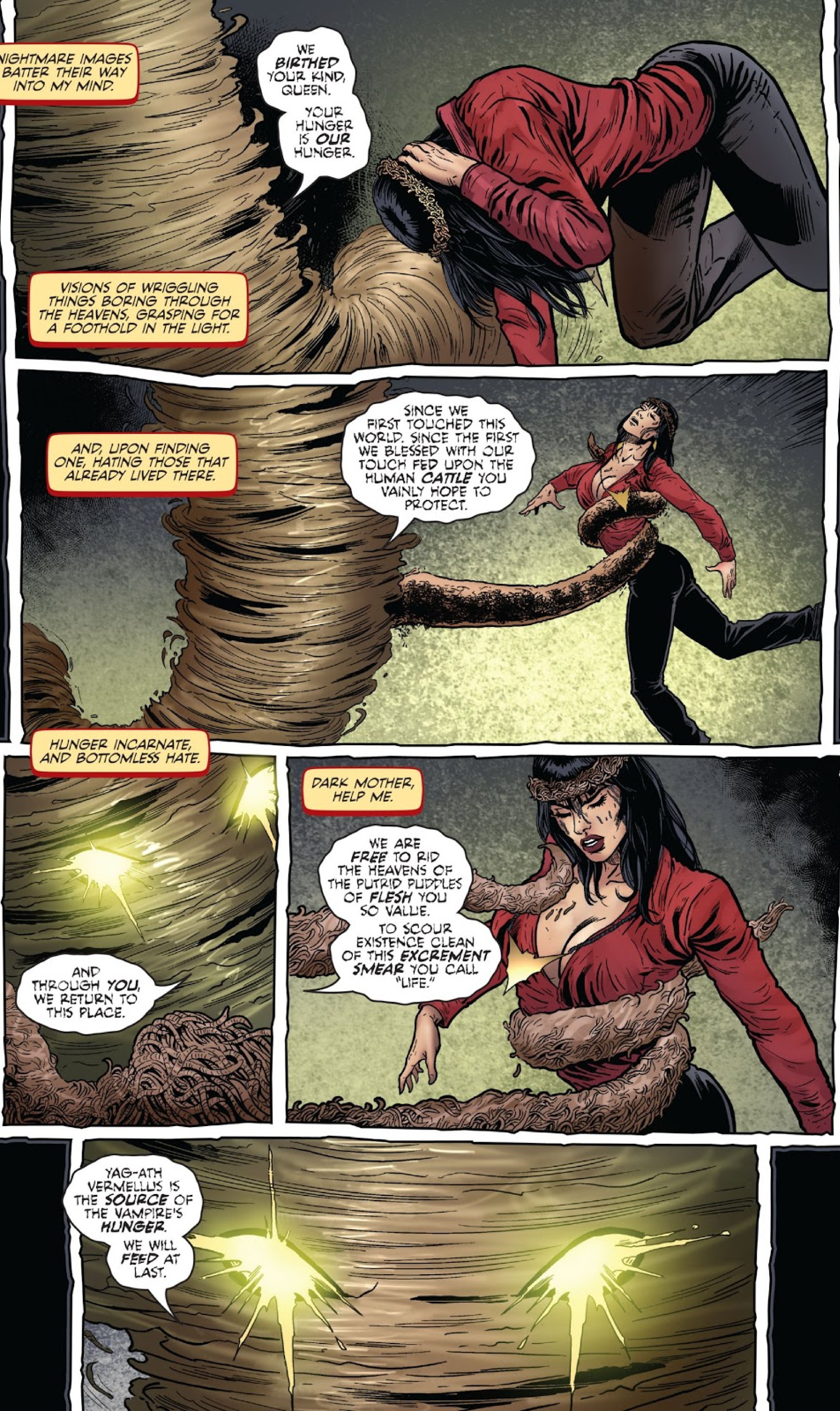

DEMANDING SOMETHING-- ANYTHING--TO SATE A SNARLING HUNGER.
CRETINS.
I KNOW THIS ONE, DON'T I? A FRIEND. AN ALLY.
WHAT WAS HER NAME?
V! COME ON, GIRL. IT'S ME. SOFIA.
NOW WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT TIME FOR YOU TO START KILLING STUFF.
BUT I CAN'T MOVE, CAN'T THINK.
I DESTROYED THE TURKS. I SURVIVED COUNTLESS WARS AND WOULD-BE VAMPIRE HUNTERS.
I FACED DOWN THE LORDS OF CHAOS AND ORDER AND RATTLED THE CAGES OF HEAVEN ITSELF.
YOU? YOU'RE JUST DYING MEAT.
A LIFELESS MARIONETTE, HER STRINGS CUT.
SEND MORE, LE FANU.
IT WON'T MATTER.
SOON, YAG-ATH VERMELLUS WILL AWAKEN HIS BRIDE.
AND YOUR TIME WILL FINALLY BE AT AN END, BETRAYER.
AN EMPTY VESSEL...

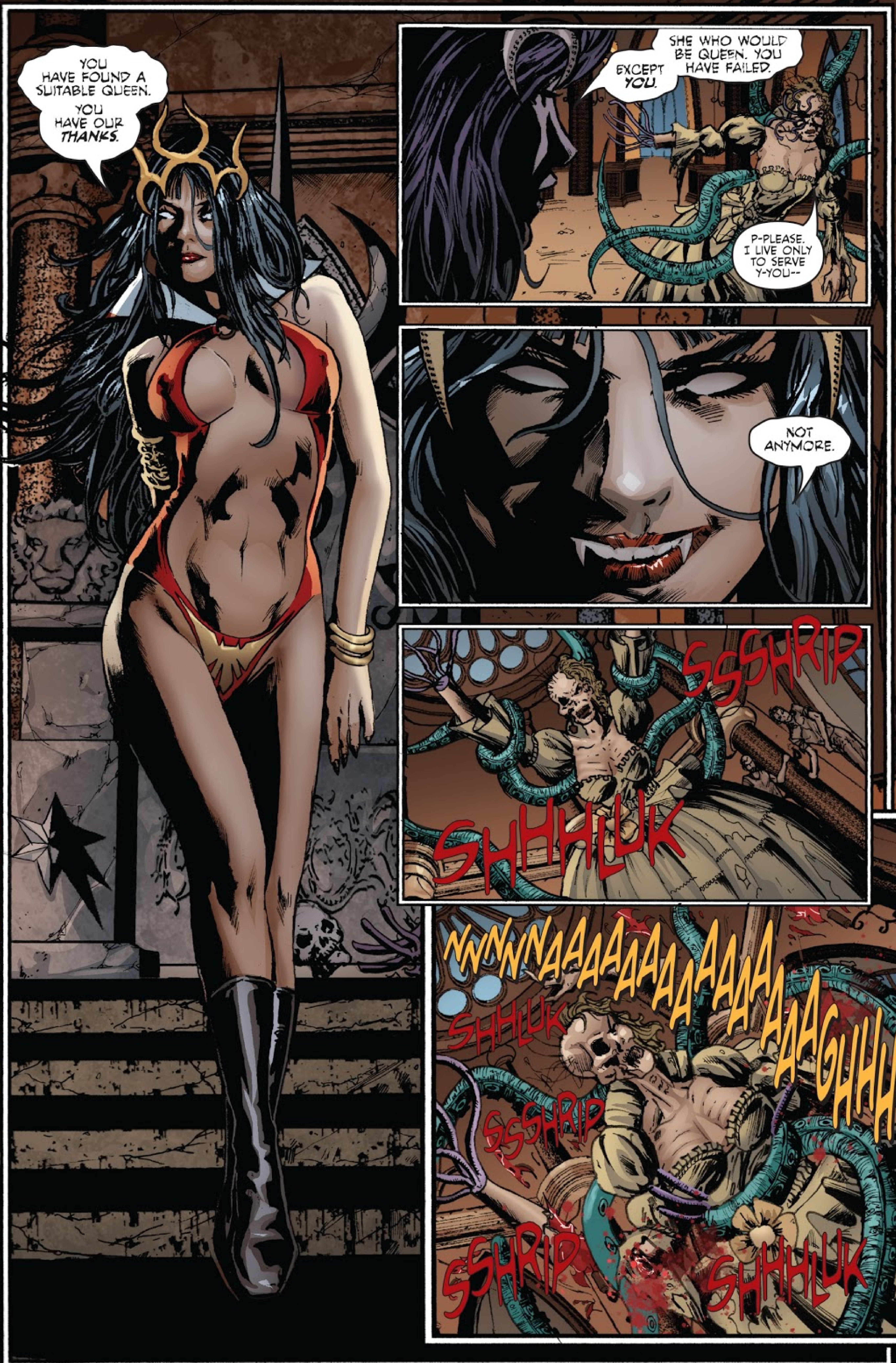

...LOST IN VOID.
?!
HURTS LIKE THE DEVIL.
--AAH!
THROBBING ICEPICK STABS BEHIND MY EYES...
...DARK MOTHER. AFTERIMAGES, JUMBLED TOGETHER, OF HERE--WHEREVER HERE IS--AND THERE.
WHIRLING NAUSEA AS MY EYES WATCH THE CARNAGE UNFOLD IN THE UNDERGROUND...
I KNOW YOUR CAN HEAR ME, WORM.
...AND IN AN EYEBLINK, BACK HERE, TO THIS NIGHTMARE OTHERSPACE, ONCE FILLED WITH HALLUCINATIONS.
LIKE DANCING ON A TIDAL WAVE.
LEAVING ME HERE IN THIS OCEAN OF EMPTINESS.
ALONE.
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TRYING TO DO.

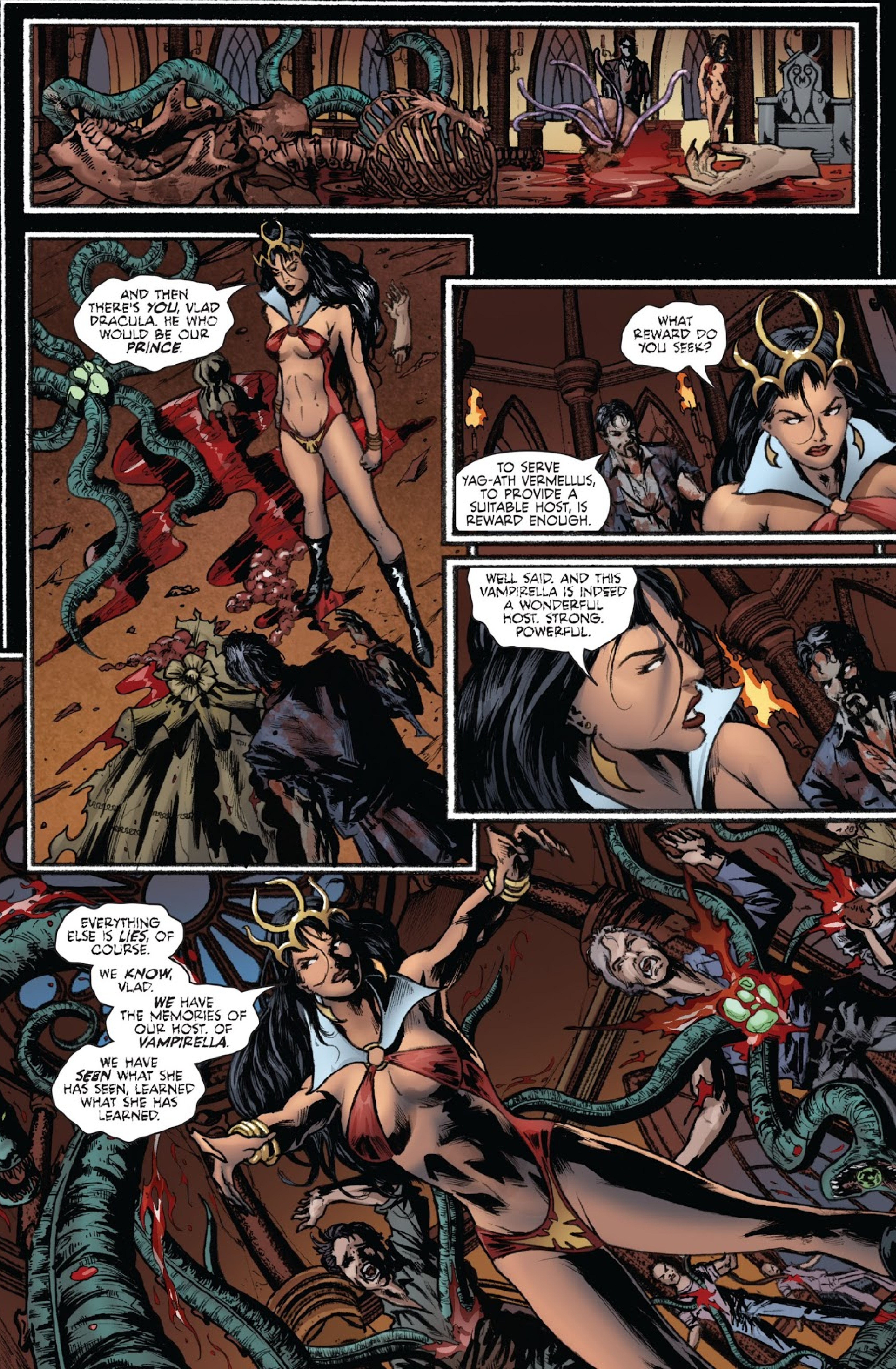

ALL ALONE.
PERFECT.
PERFECT TIMING, SOFIA. FOLLOW THE CRAZY VAMPIRE CHICK INTO A GODDAMN **NEST** OF BLOODSUCKERS.
JUST WHEN SHE GOES **CATATONIC**.
SERIOUSLY, V.
WAKE!
UP!
nnnnNNNNn
ALL RIGHT.
SCREW THIS.
HAVE TO DO EVERY DAMN THING MYSELF.
--Hnnn?

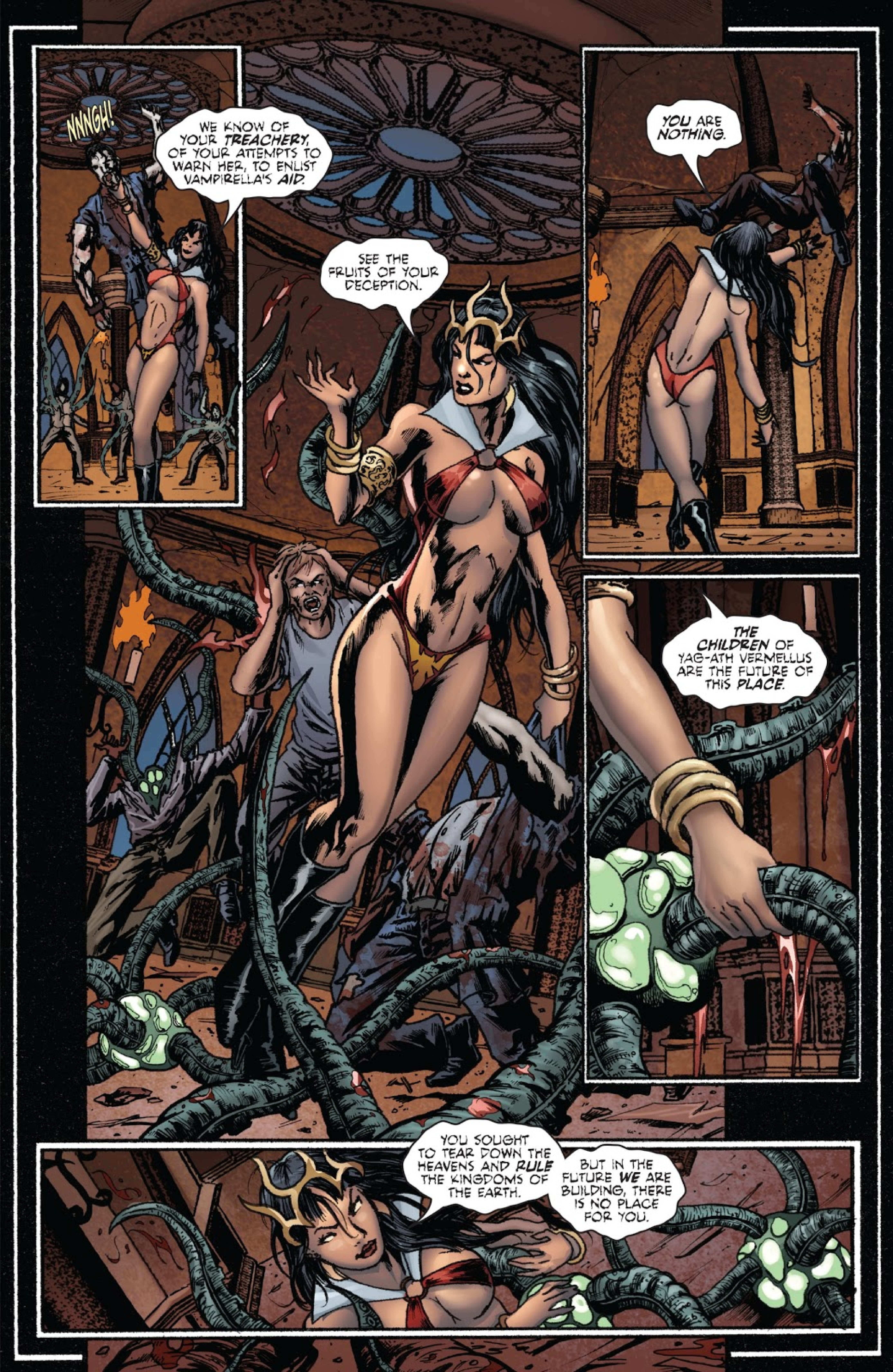

SINCE THE FIRST MOMENT I TOUCHED LE FANU'S DAMNED KEY, IT'S BEEN THERE.
NOT ALONE, BRIDE.
NEVER ALONE.
HUMMING THROUGH MY BRAIN. WHISPERING TO ME.
TOGETHER IN THE COLD EMPTY.
US.
FOREVER.
GOADING ME ON.
IT IS TIME, BRIDE.
URGING ME TO RAGE, PUSHING ME TO KILL.
YOU SHALL WEAR OUR CROWN.
AND WE SHALL FEED.
-NNNGH!
WE SHALL HATE.

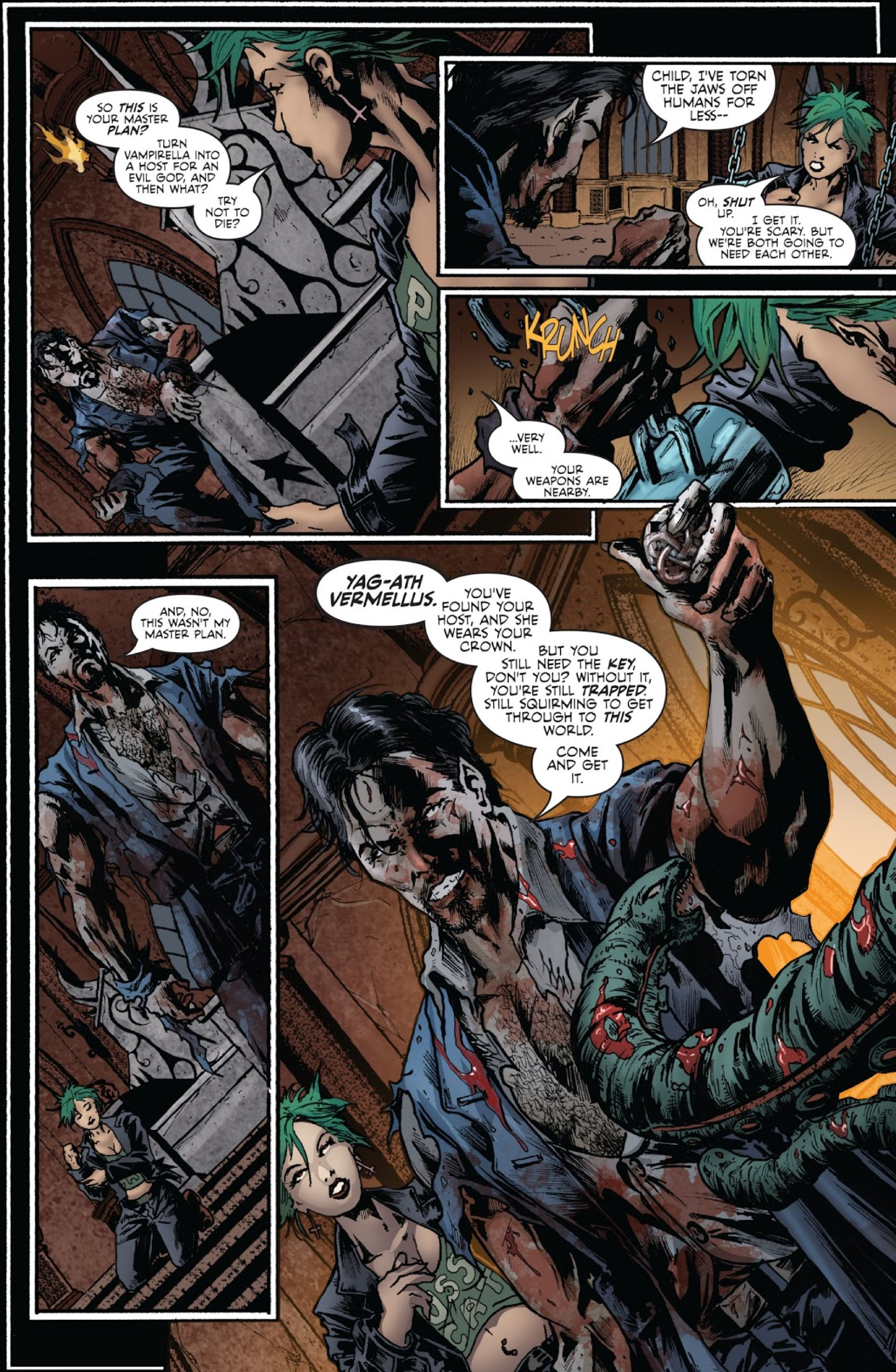

CAN'T STOP IT.
YOU SEE? YOU'VE LOST.
YAG-ATH VERMELLUS HAS CHOSEN A QUEEN. VAMPIRELLA WEARS THE CROWN NOW.
LIKE HOLDING BACK A HURRICANE.
YOUR TIME IS UP.
SLAMMING ALL THAT IS ME ASIDE.
A PASSENGER IN MY OWN BODY.
AT LAST.
OH CRAP. THIS CAN'T BE GOOD.

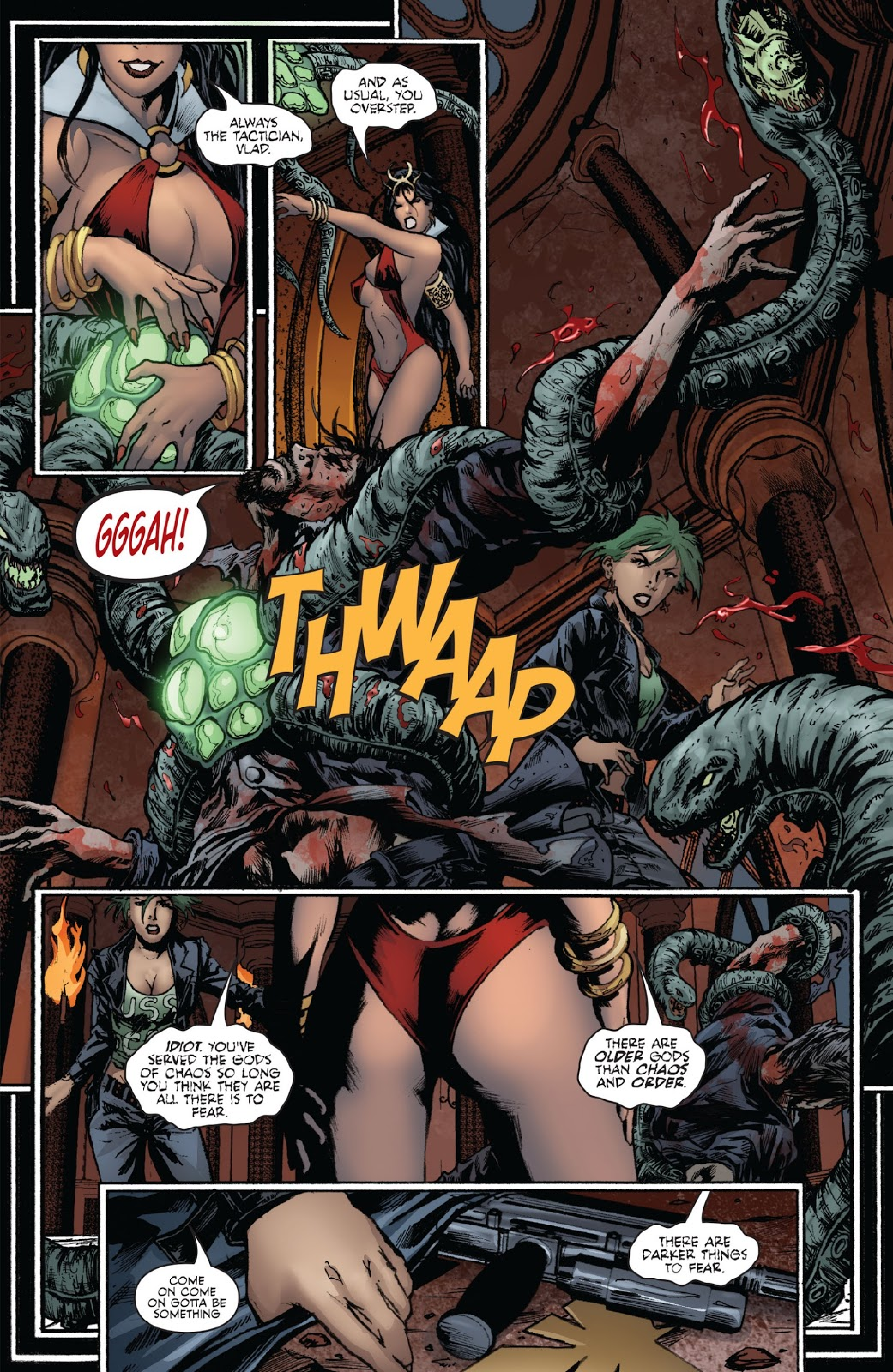

NIGHTMARE IMAGES BATTER THEIR WAY INTO MY MIND.
WE BIRTHED YOUR KIND, QUEEN. YOUR HUNGER IS OUR HUNGER.
VISIONS OF WRIGGLING THINGS BORING THROUGH THE HEAVENS, GRASPING FOR A FOOTHOLD IN THE LIGHT.
AND, UPON FINDING ONE, HATING THOSE THAT ALREADY LIVED THERE.
SINCE WE FIRST TOUCHED THIS WORLD. SINCE THE FIRST WE BLESSED WITH OUR TOUCH FED UPON THE HUMAN CATTLE YOU VAINLY HOPE TO PROTECT.
HUNGER INCARNATE, AND BOTTOMLESS HATE.
AND THROUGH YOU, WE RETURN TO THIS PLACE.
DARK MOTHER, HELP ME.
WE ARE FREE TO RID THE HEAVENS OF THE PUTRID PUDDLES OF FLESH YOU SO VALUE. TO SCOUR EXISTENCE CLEAN OF THIS EXCREMENT SMEAR YOU CALL "LIFE."
YAG-ATH VERMELLUS IS THE SOURCE OF THE VAMPIRE'S HUNGER. WE WILL FEED AT LAST.

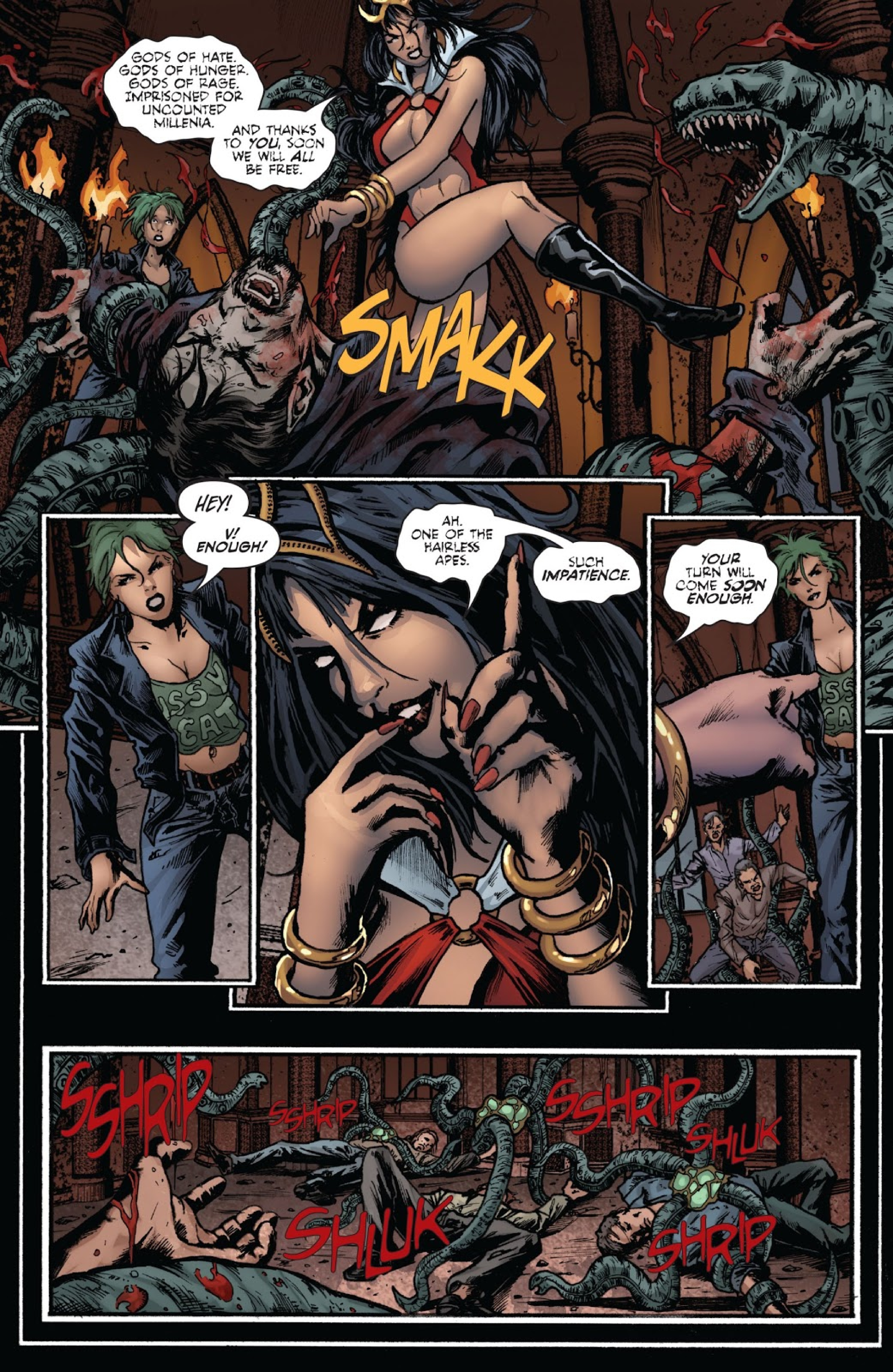

YOU HAVE FOUND A SUITABLE QUEEN. YOU HAVE OUR *THANKS.*
EXCEPT *YOU.*
SHE WHO WOULD BE QUEEN. YOU HAVE FAILED.
P-PLEASE. I LIVE ONLY TO SERVE Y-YOU--
NOT ANYMORE.
SSSHRIP
SHHHLUK
NNNNAAAAAAAAAAAAAAGHHH
SHHLUK
SSSHRIP
SSHRIP
SHHHLUK

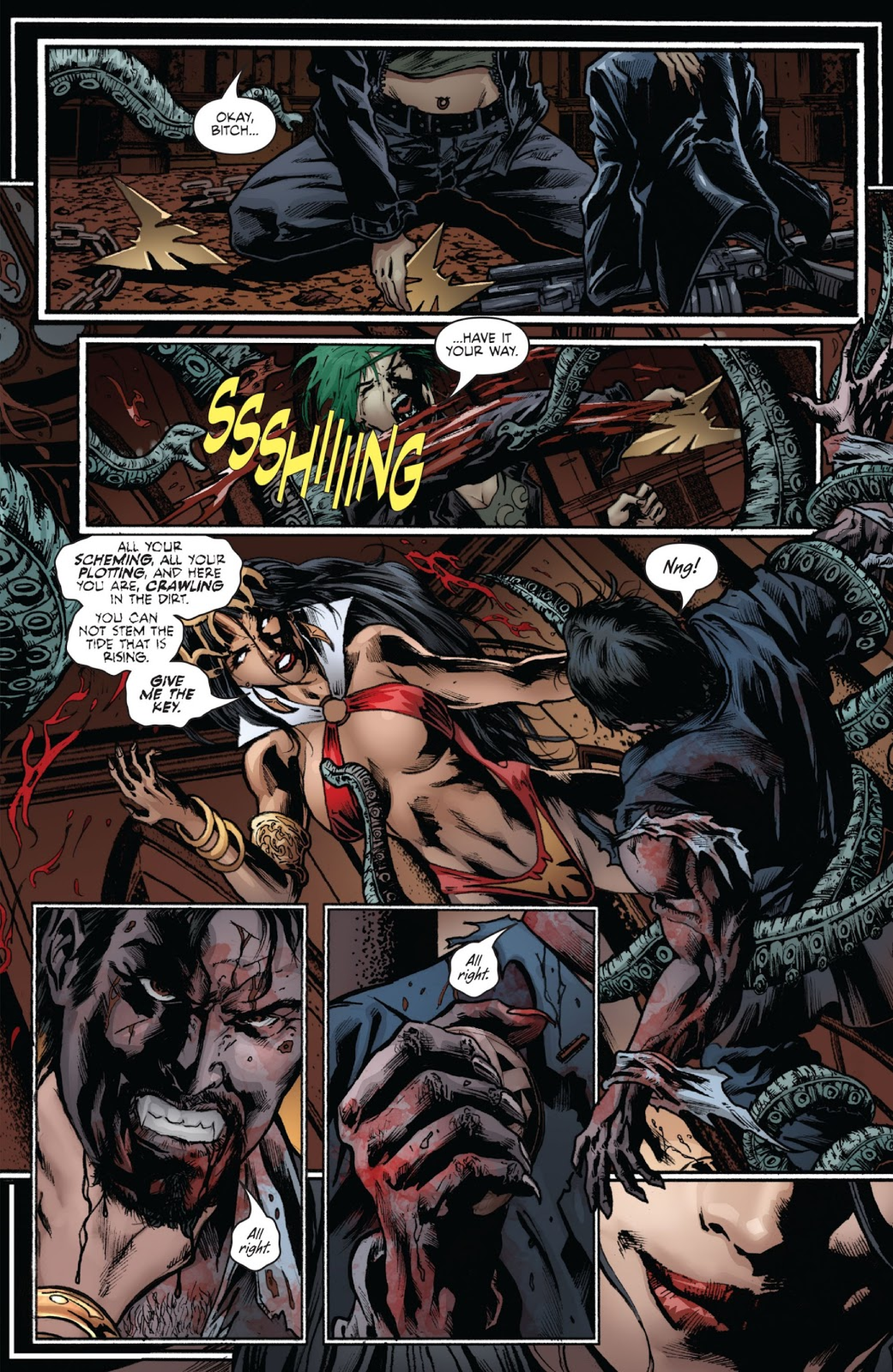

AND THEN THERE'S *YOU*, VLAD DRACULA. HE WHO WOULD BE OUR *PRINCE*.
WHAT REWARD DO YOU SEEK?
TO SERVE YAG-ATH VERMELLUS, TO PROVIDE A SUITABLE HOST, IS REWARD ENOUGH.
WELL SAID. AND THIS VAMPIRELLA IS INDEED A WONDERFUL HOST. STRONG. POWERFUL.
EVERYTHING ELSE IS *LIES*, OF COURSE.
WE *KNOW*, VLAD.
WE HAVE THE MEMORIES OF OUR HOST. OF *VAMPIRELLA*.
WE HAVE *SEEN* WHAT SHE HAS SEEN, LEARNED WHAT SHE HAS LEARNED.

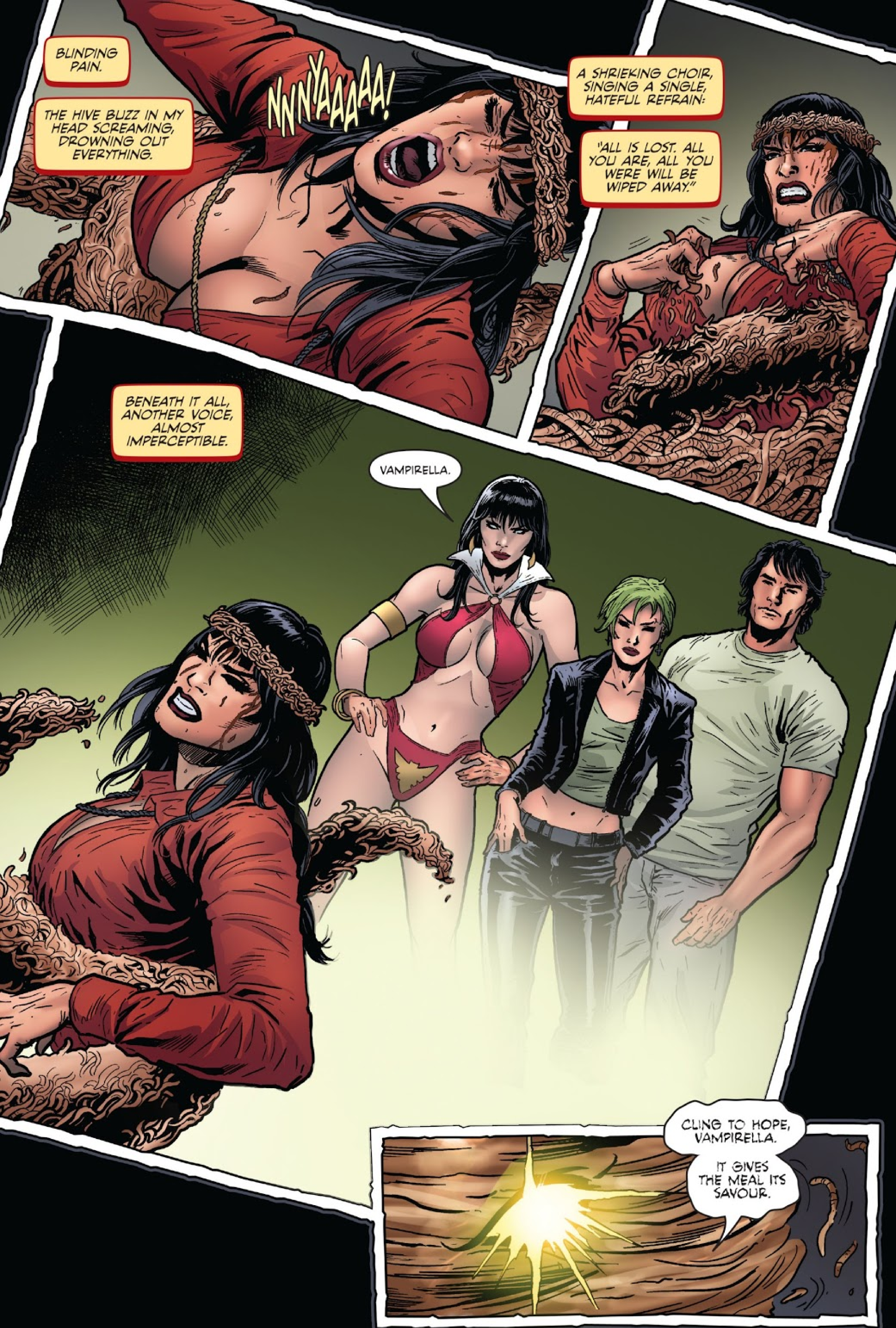

NNNGH!
WE KNOW OF YOUR **TREACHERY**, OF YOUR ATTEMPTS TO WARN HER, TO ENLIST VAMPIRELLA'S **AID**.
SEE THE FRUITS OF YOUR DECEPTION.
YOU ARE **NOTHING**.
THE CHILDREN OF YAG-ATH VERMELLUS ARE THE FUTURE OF THIS **PLACE**.
YOU SOUGHT TO TEAR DOWN THE HEAVENS AND **RULE** THE KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH.
BUT IN THE FUTURE **WE** ARE BUILDING, THERE IS NO PLACE FOR YOU.

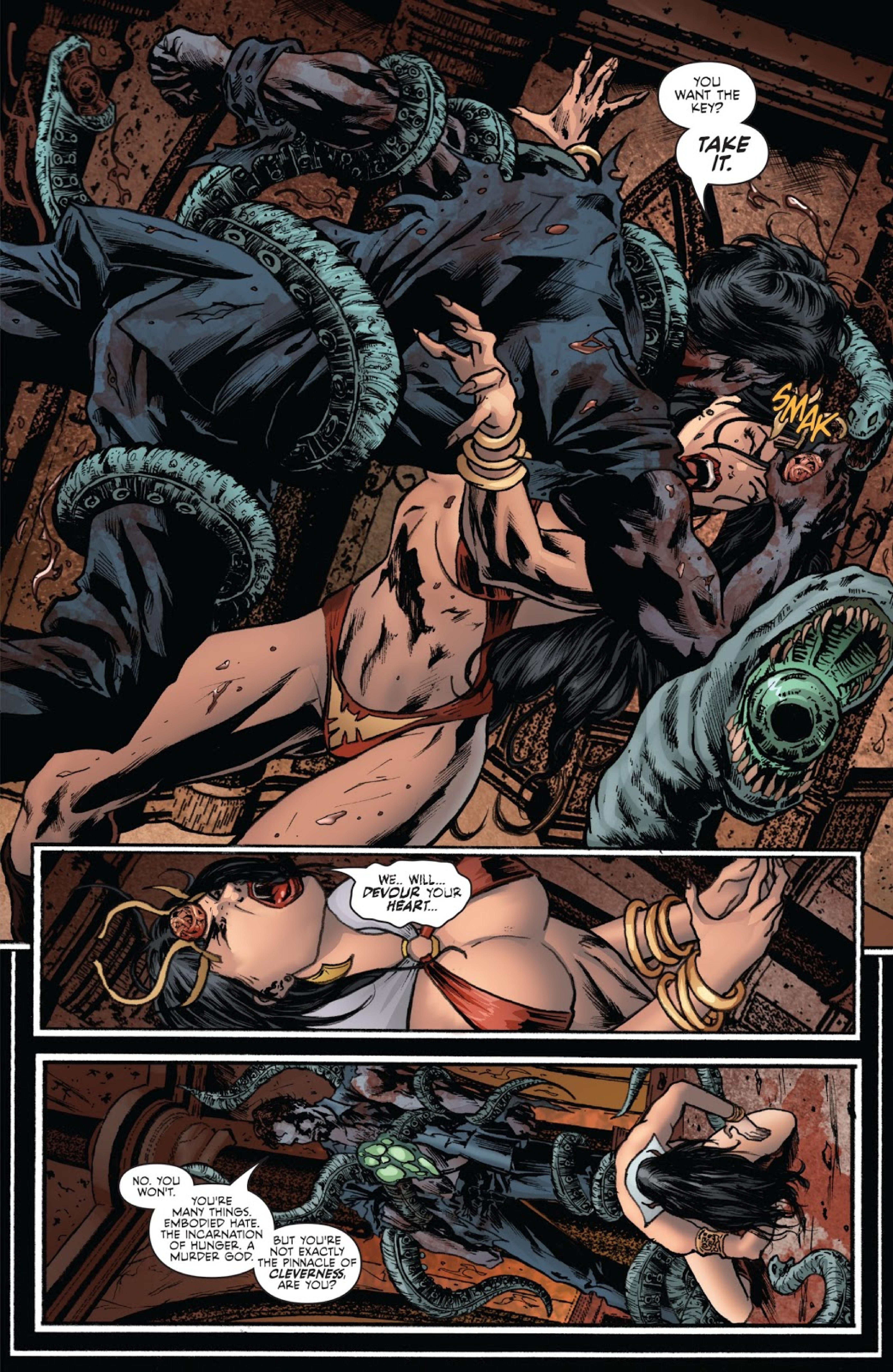

SO *THIS* IS YOUR MASTER *PLAN?*
TURN VAMPIRELLA INTO A HOST FOR AN EVIL GOD, AND THEN WHAT?
TRY NOT TO DIE?
CHILD, I'VE TORN THE JAWS OFF HUMANS FOR LESS--
OH, *SHUT* UP.
I GET IT. YOU'RE SCARY. BUT WE'RE BOTH GOING TO NEED EACH OTHER.
KRUNCH
...VERY WELL.
YOUR WEAPONS ARE NEARBY.
AND, NO, THIS WASN'T MY MASTER PLAN.
YAG-ATH VERMELLUS.
YOU'VE FOUND YOUR HOST, AND SHE WEARS YOUR CROWN.
BUT YOU STILL NEED THE *KEY*, DON'T YOU? WITHOUT IT, YOU'RE STILL *TRAPPED*. STILL SQUIRMING TO GET THROUGH TO *THIS* WORLD.
COME AND GET IT.

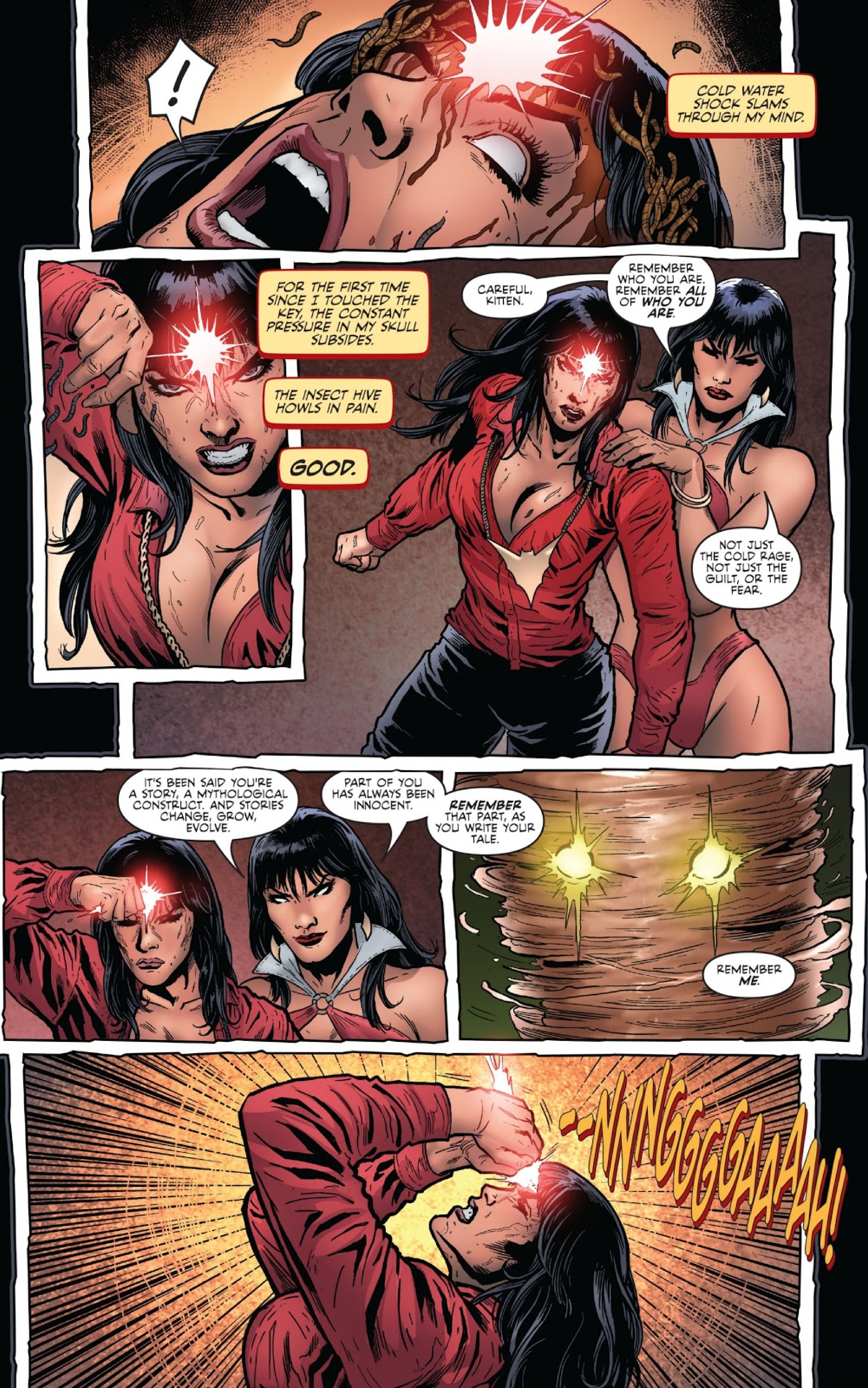

ALWAYS THE TACTICIAN, VLAD.
AND AS USUAL, YOU OVERSTEP.
GGGAH!
THWAAP
IDIOT. YOU'VE SERVED THE GODS OF CHAOS SO LONG YOU THINK THEY ARE ALL THERE IS TO FEAR.
THERE ARE *OLDER* GODS THAN *CHAOS* AND *ORDER*.
THERE ARE DARKER THINGS TO FEAR.
COME ON COME ON GOTTA BE SOMETHING

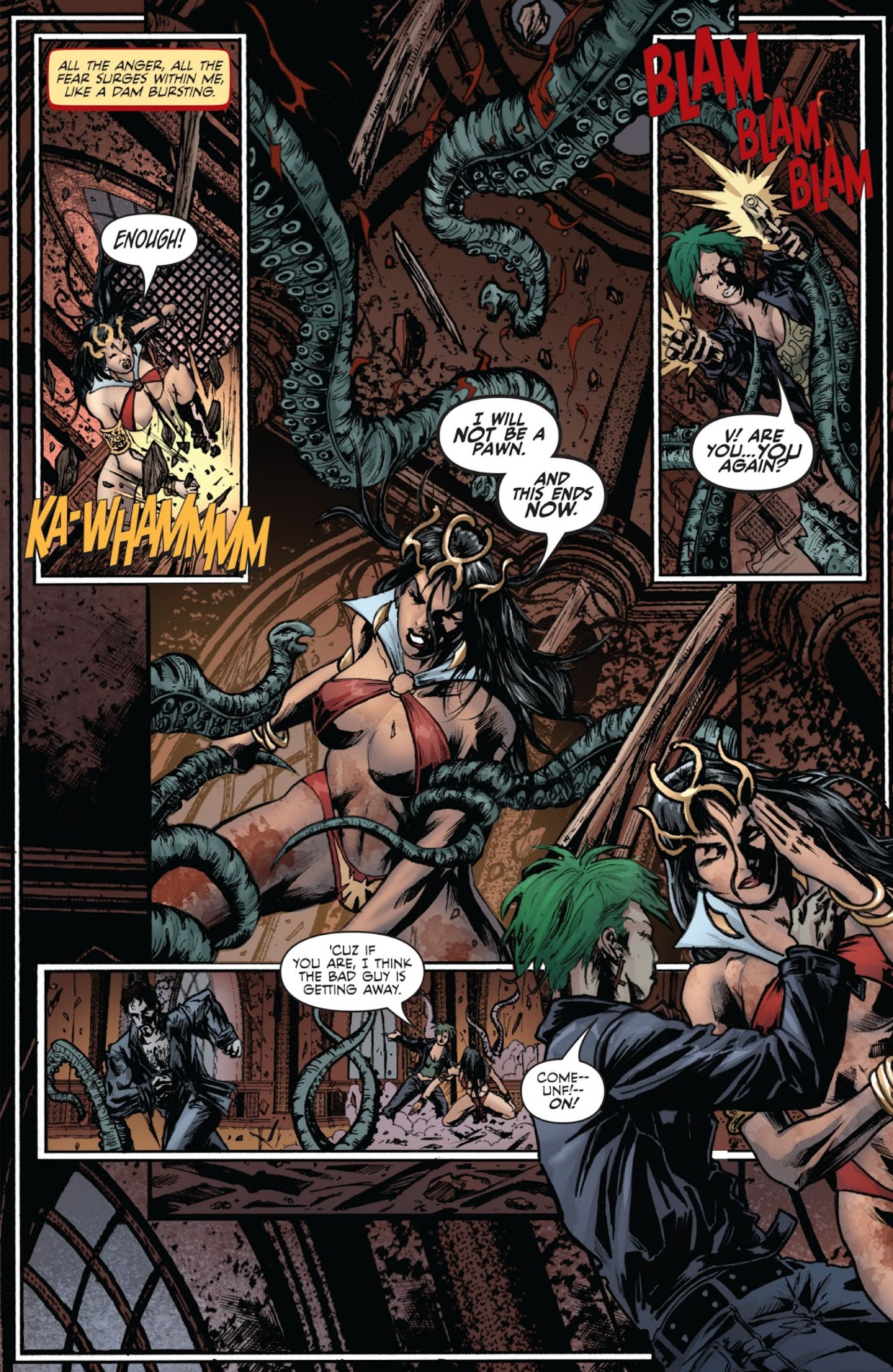

GODS OF HATE. GODS OF HUNGER. GODS OF RAGE. IMPRISONED FOR UNCOUNTED MILLENIA.
AND THANKS TO *YOU*, SOON WE WILL *ALL* BE FREE.
SMAKK
HEY!
V! ENOUGH!
AH. ONE OF THE HAIRLESS APES.
SUCH *IMPATIENCE*.
YOUR TURN WILL COME **SOON** *ENOUGH*.
SSHRIP
SSHRIP
SSHRIP
SHLUK
SHLUK
SHRIP

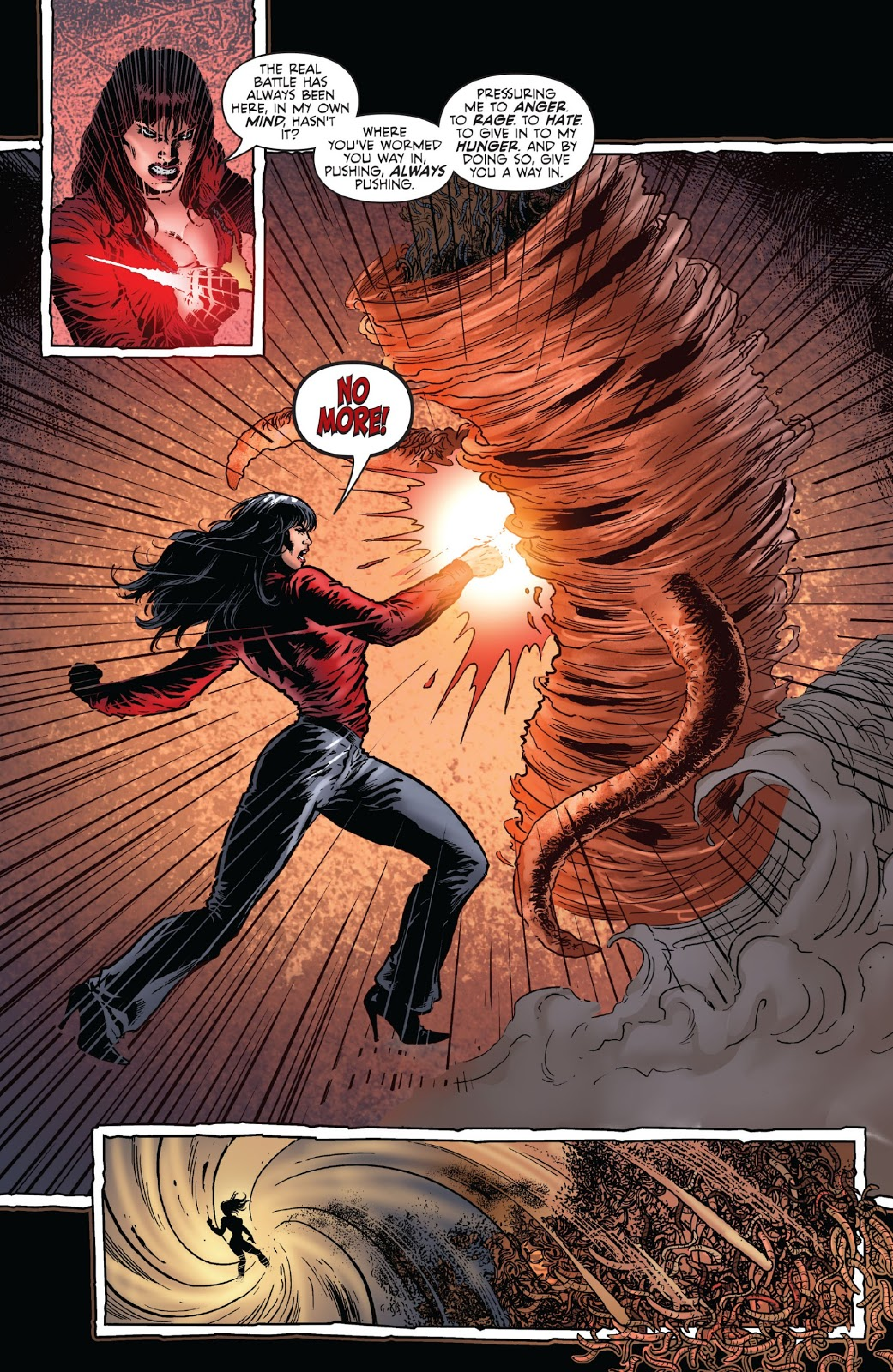

OKAY, BITCH...
...HAVE IT YOUR WAY.
SSSHIIIING
ALL YOUR SCHEMING, ALL YOUR PLOTTING, AND HERE YOU ARE, CRAWLING IN THE DIRT.
YOU CAN NOT STEM THE TIDE THAT IS RISING.
GIVE ME THE KEY.
Nng!
All right.
All right.

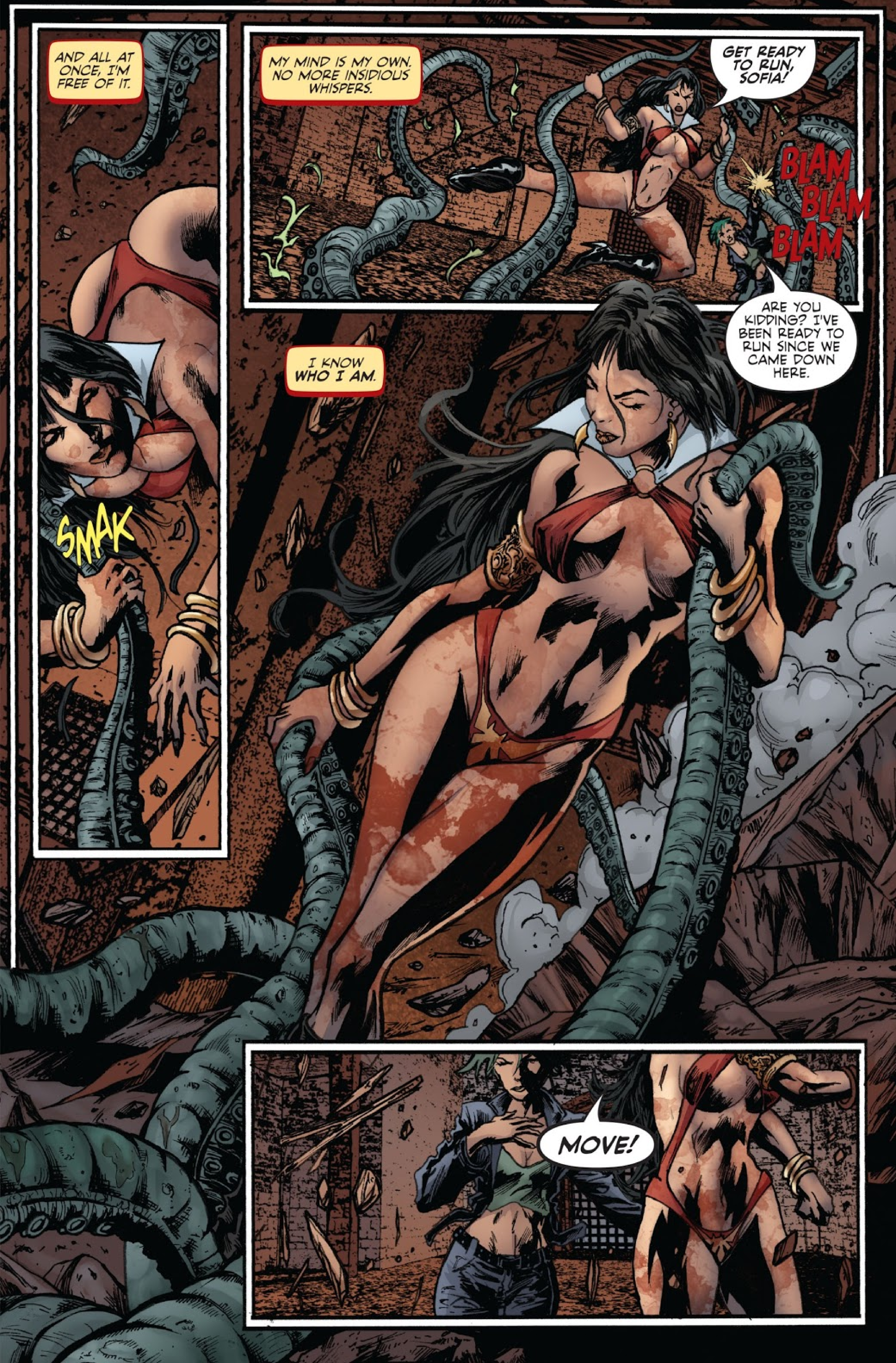

BLINDING PAIN.
THE HIVE BUZZ IN MY HEAD SCREAMING, DROWNING OUT EVERYTHING.
NNNYAAAAA!
A SHRIEKING CHOIR, SINGING A SINGLE, HATEFUL REFRAIN:
"ALL IS LOST. ALL YOU ARE, ALL YOU WERE WILL BE WIPED AWAY."
BENEATH IT ALL, ANOTHER VOICE, ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLE.
VAMPIRELLA.
CLING TO HOPE, VAMPIRELLA.
IT GIVES THE MEAL ITS SAVOUR.

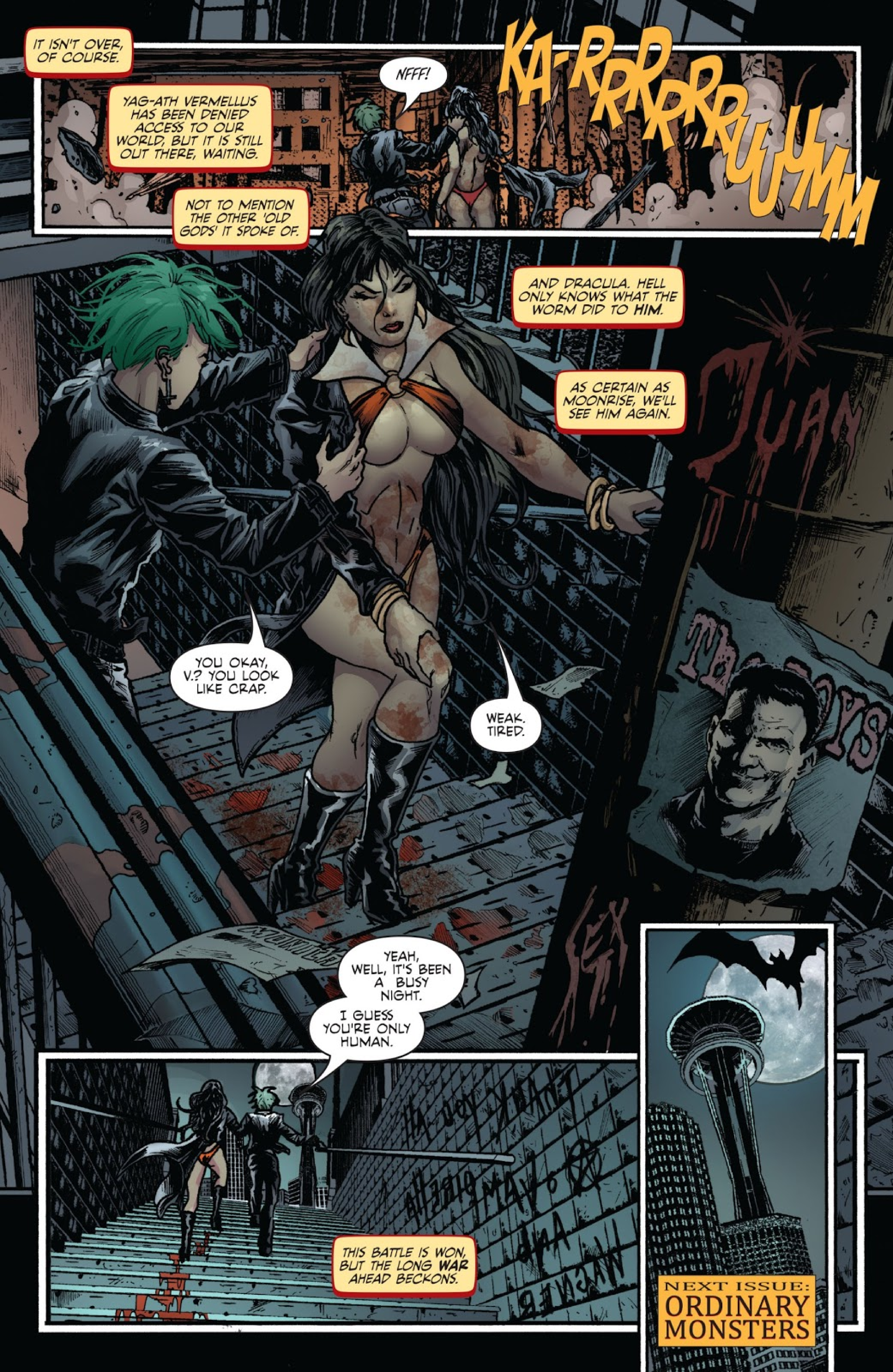

YOU WANT THE KEY?
TAKE IT.
SMAK
WE.. WILL... DEVOUR YOUR HEART...
NO. YOU WON'T.
YOU'RE MANY THINGS. EMBODIED HATE. THE INCARNATION OF HUNGER. A MURDER GOD.
BUT YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY THE PINNACLE OF CLEVERNESS, ARE YOU?


!
COLD WATER SHOCK SLAMS THROUGH MY MIND.
FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE I TOUCHED THE KEY, THE CONSTANT PRESSURE IN MY SKULL SUBSIDES.
THE INSECT HIVE HOWLS IN PAIN.
GOOD.
CAREFUL, KITTEN.
REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE. REMEMBER ALL OF WHO YOU ARE.
NOT JUST THE COLD RAGE, NOT JUST THE GUILT, OR THE FEAR.
IT'S BEEN SAID YOU'RE A STORY, A MYTHOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT. AND STORIES CHANGE, GROW, EVOLVE.
PART OF YOU HAS ALWAYS BEEN INNOCENT.
REMEMBER THAT PART, AS YOU WRITE YOUR TALE.
REMEMBER ME.
--NNNGGGGAAAAH!

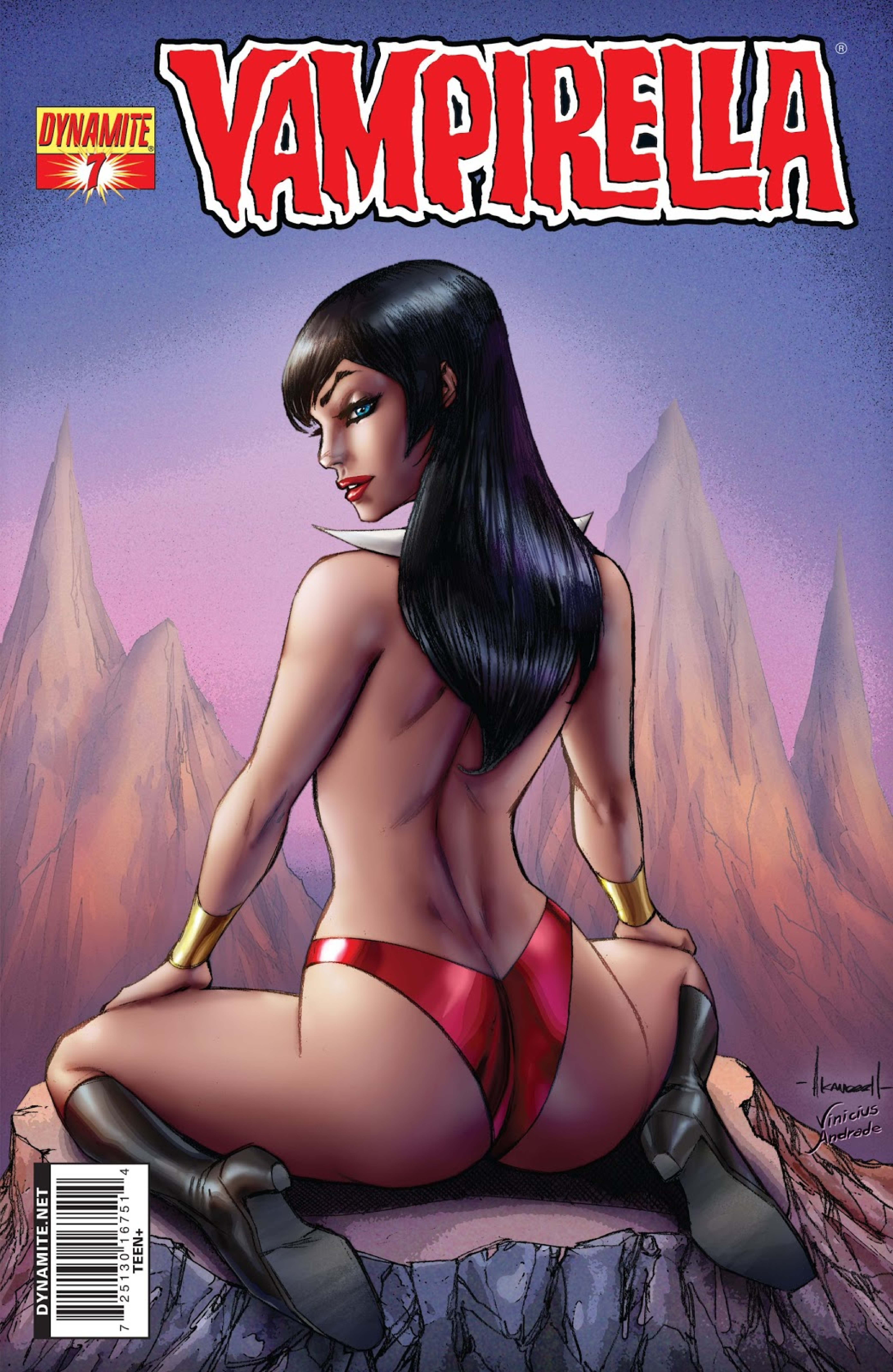

ALL THE ANGER, ALL THE FEAR SURGES WITHIN ME, LIKE A DAM BURSTING.
ENOUGH!
KA-WHAMMMM
BLAM BLAM BLAM
V! ARE YOU...YOU AGAIN?
I WILL NOT BE A PAWN.
AND THIS ENDS NOW.
'CUZ IF YOU ARE, I THINK THE BAD GUY IS GETTING AWAY.
COME-- UNF!-- ON!


THE REAL BATTLE HAS ALWAYS BEEN HERE, IN MY OWN *MIND*, HASN'T IT?
WHERE YOU'VE WORMED YOU WAY IN, PUSHING, *ALWAYS* PUSHING.
PRESSURING ME TO *ANGER*. TO *RAGE*. TO *HATE*. TO GIVE IN TO MY *HUNGER*. AND BY DOING SO, GIVE YOU A WAY IN.
NO MORE!


AND ALL AT ONCE, I'M FREE OF IT.
SMAK
MY MIND IS MY OWN. NO MORE INSIDIOUS WHISPERS.
GET READY TO RUN, SOFIA!
BLAM BLAM BLAM
ARE YOU KIDDING? I'VE BEEN READY TO RUN SINCE WE CAME DOWN HERE.
I KNOW WHO I AM.
MOVE!


IT ISN'T OVER, OF COURSE.
YAG-ATH VERMELLUS HAS BEEN DENIED ACCESS TO OUR WORLD, BUT IT IS STILL OUT THERE, WAITING.
NFFF!
KA-RRRRRRUUUMMM
NOT TO MENTION THE OTHER 'OLD GODS' IT SPOKE OF.
AND DRACULA. HELL ONLY KNOWS WHAT THE WORM DID TO **HIM**.
AS CERTAIN AS MOONRISE, WE'LL SEE HIM AGAIN.
YOU OKAY, V.? YOU LOOK LIKE CRAP.
WEAK. TIRED.
YEAH, WELL, IT'S BEEN A BUSY NIGHT.
I GUESS YOU'RE ONLY HUMAN.
THIS BATTLE IS WON, BUT THE LONG **WAR** AHEAD BECKONS.
NEXT ISSUE:
ORDINARY MONSTERS

DYNAMITE
7
VAMPIRELLA®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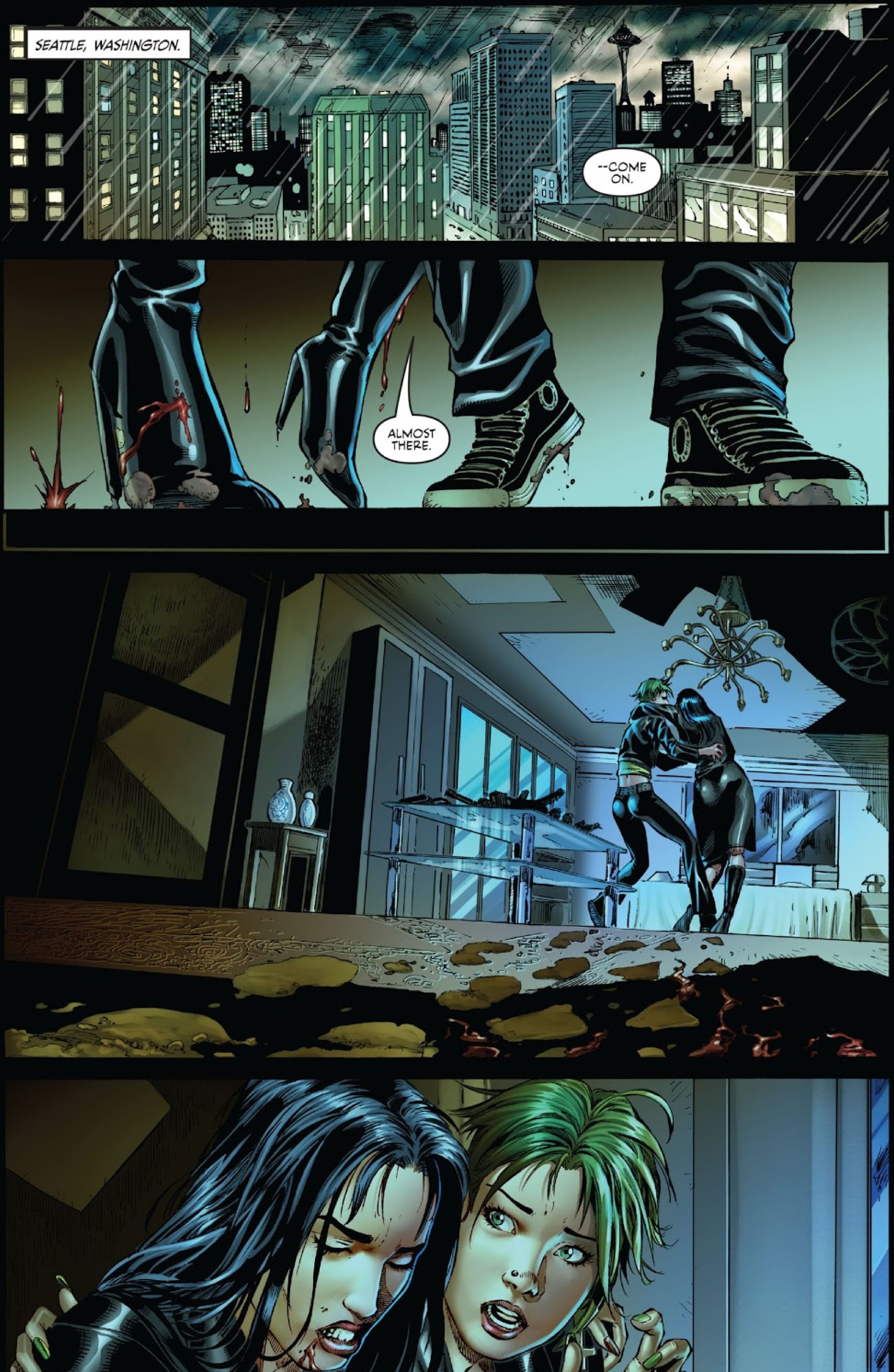
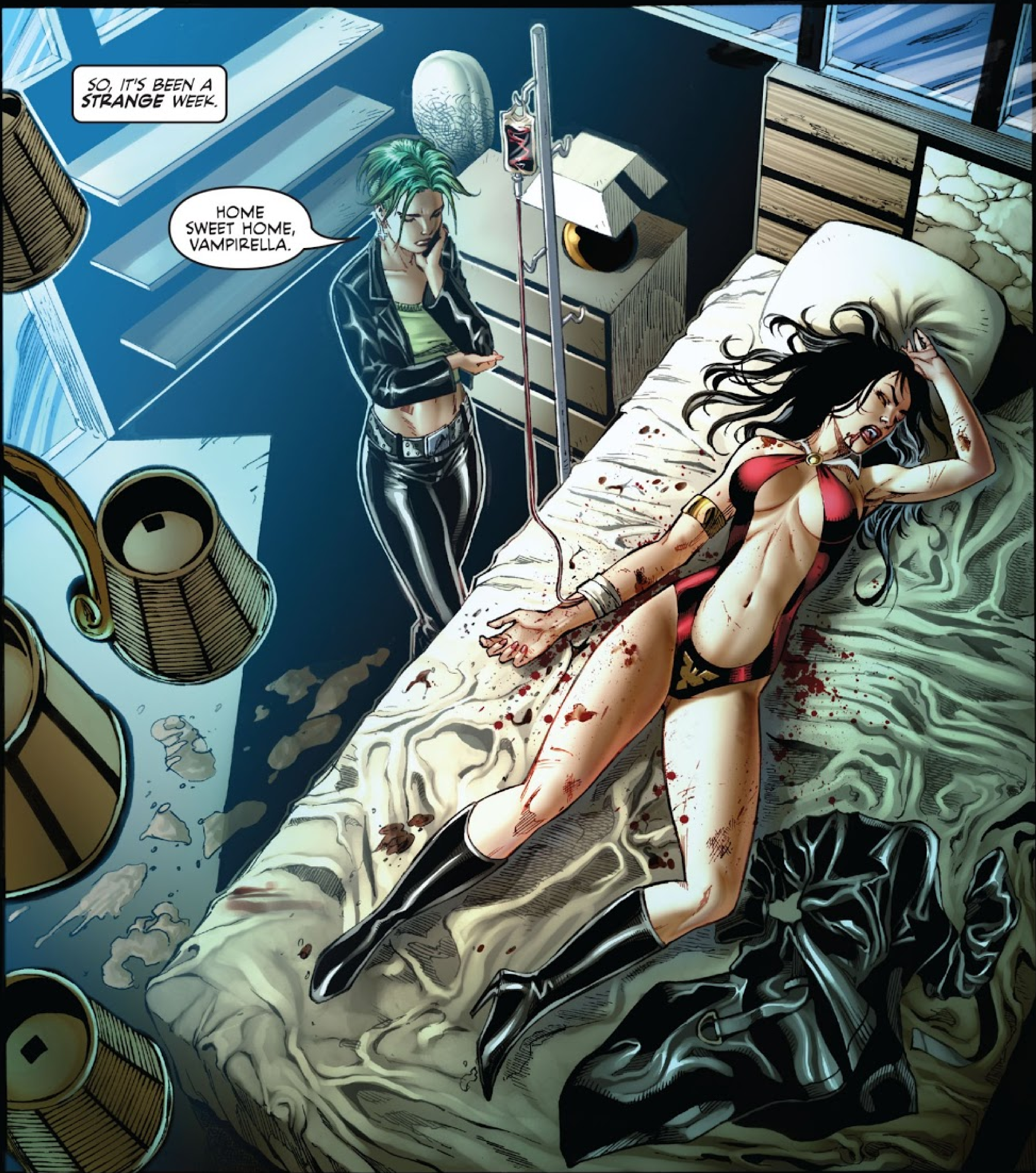
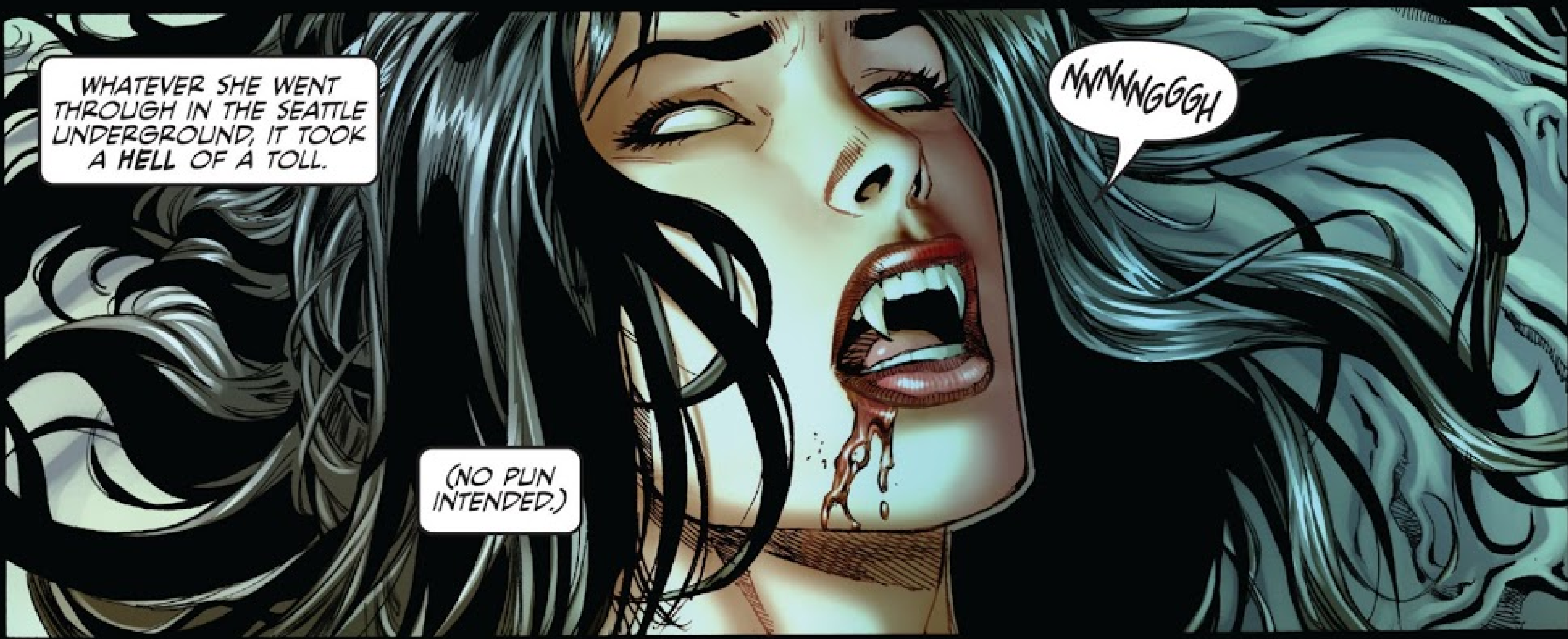
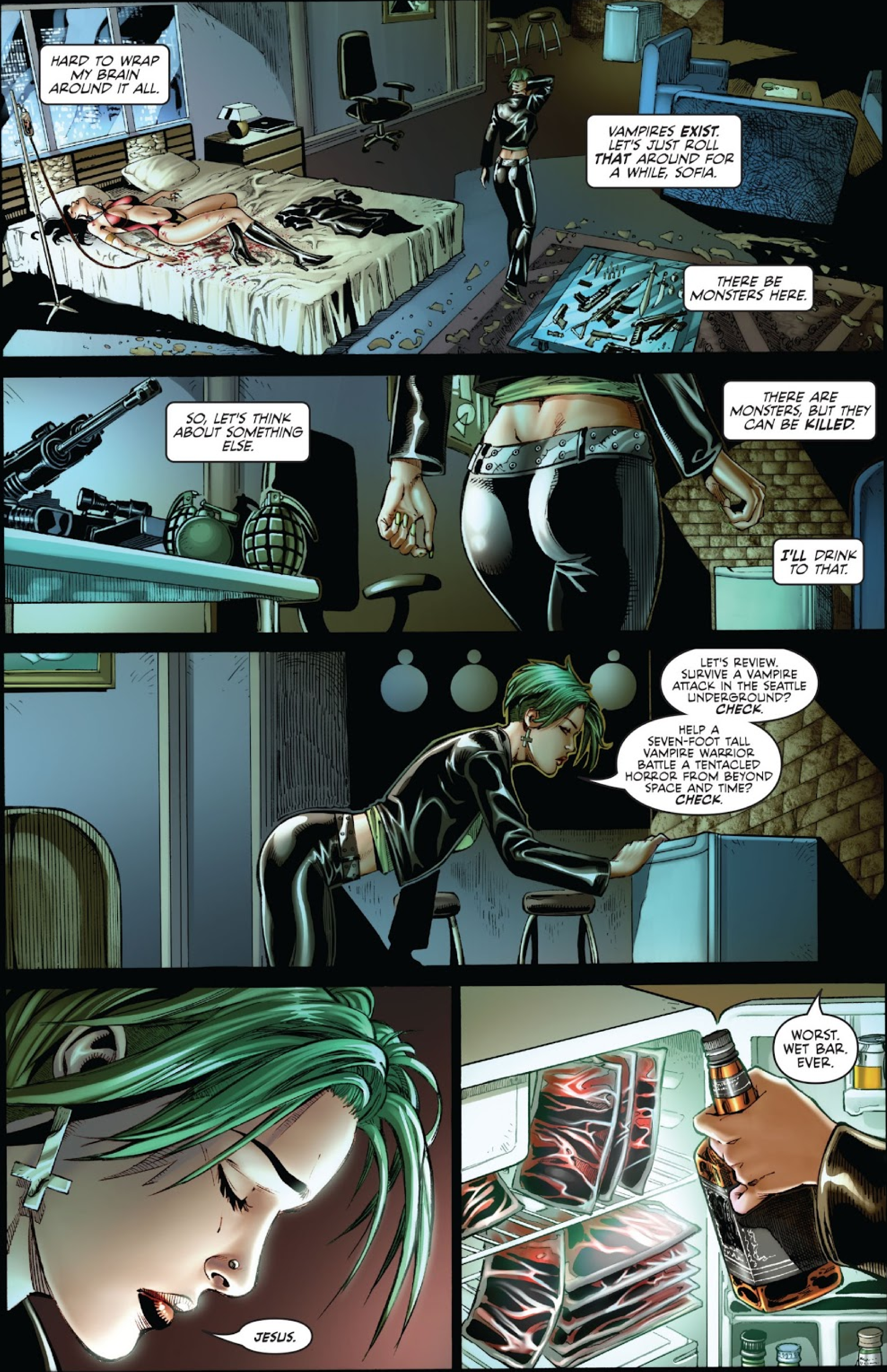
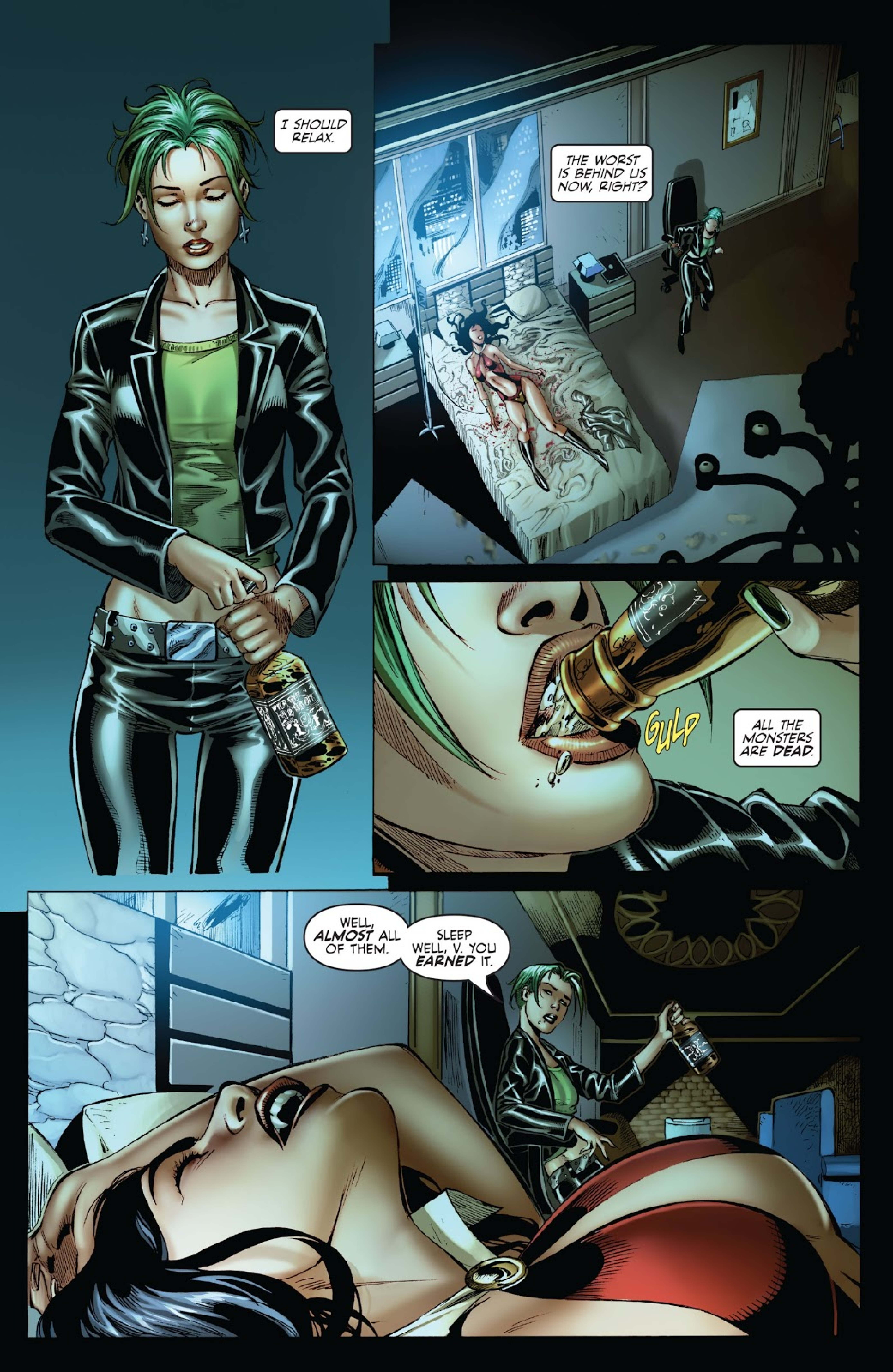
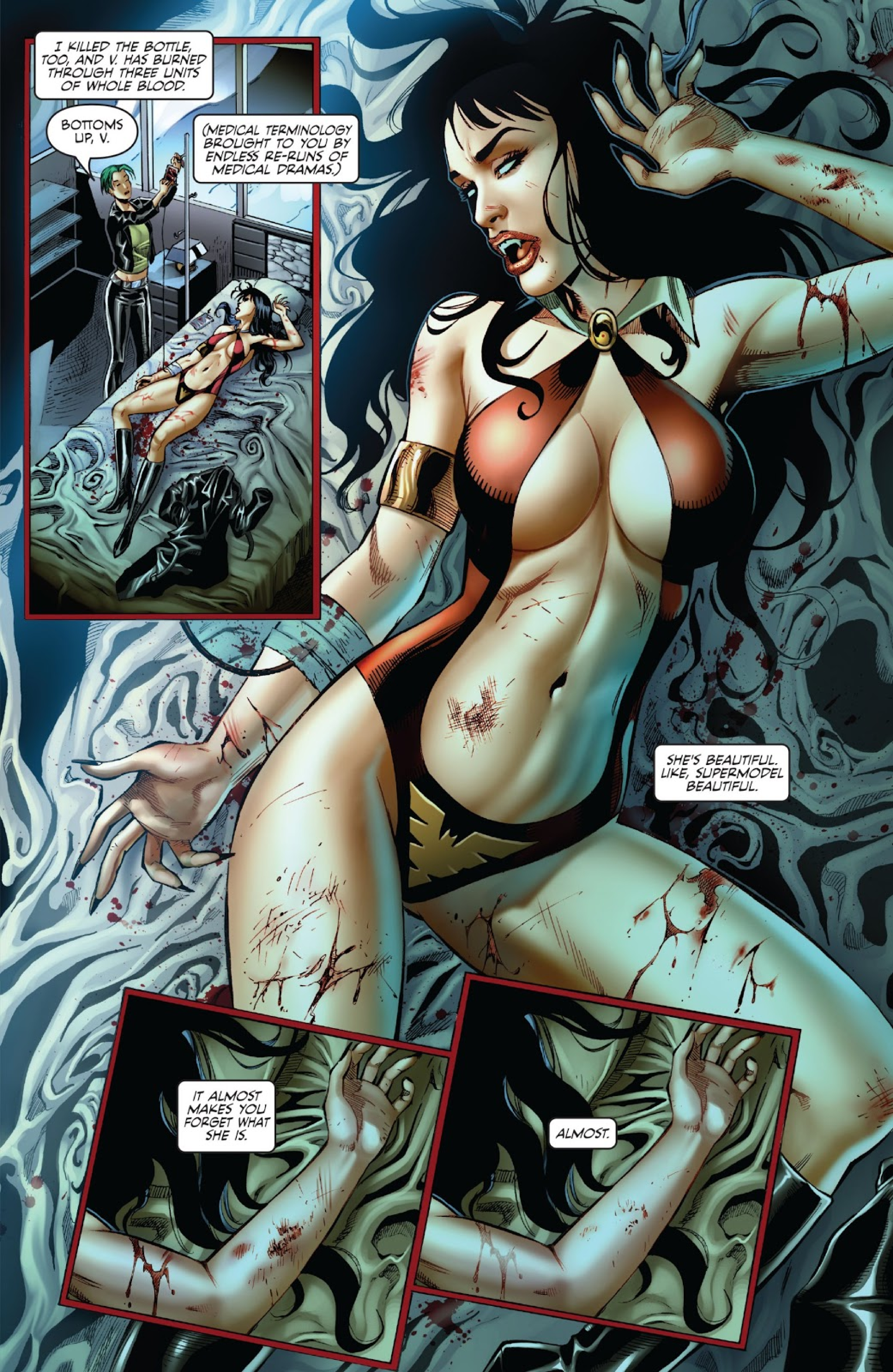

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON.
--COME ON.
ALMOST THERE.

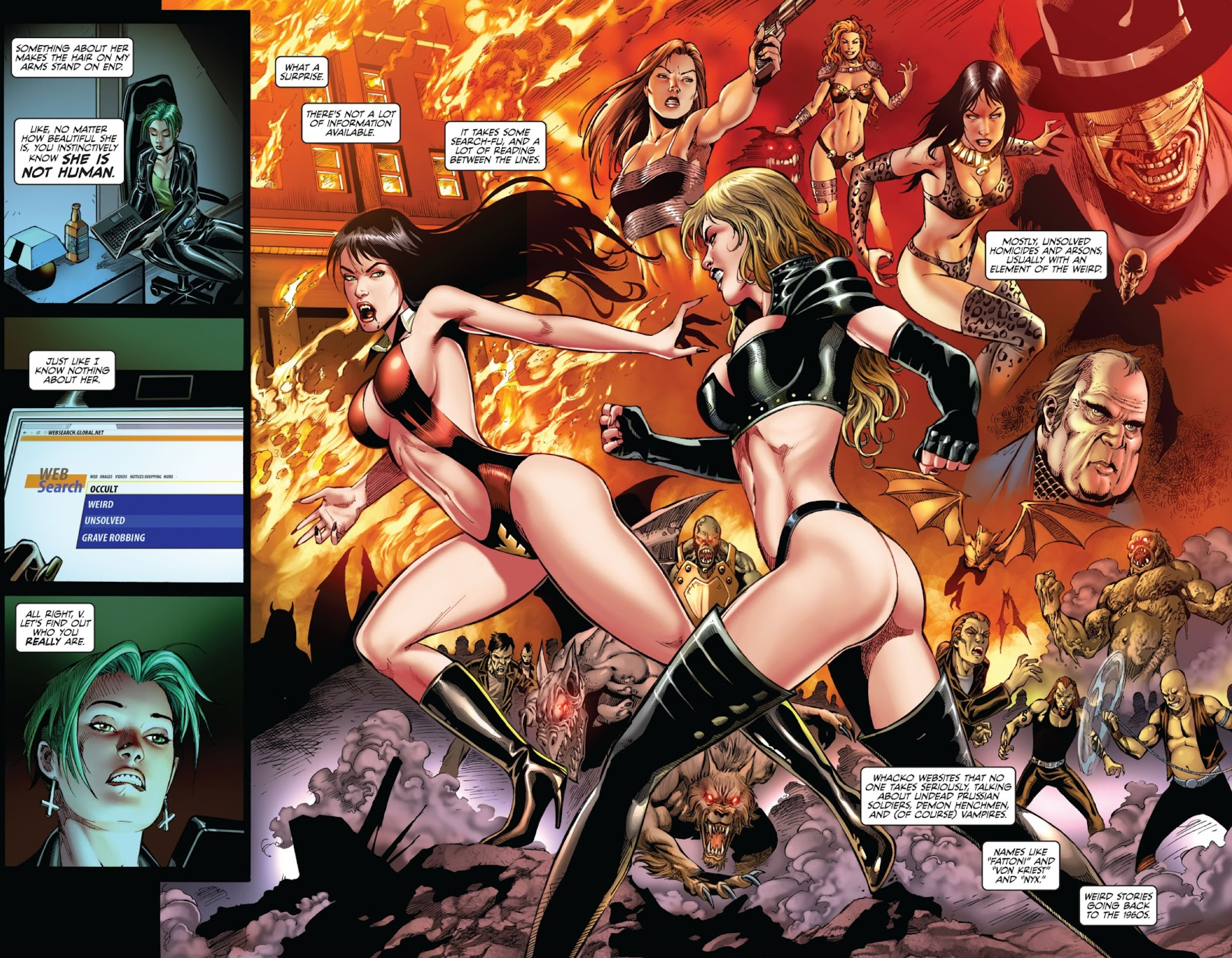

SO, IT'S BEEN A STRANGE WEEK.
HOME SWEET HOME, VAMPIRELLA.

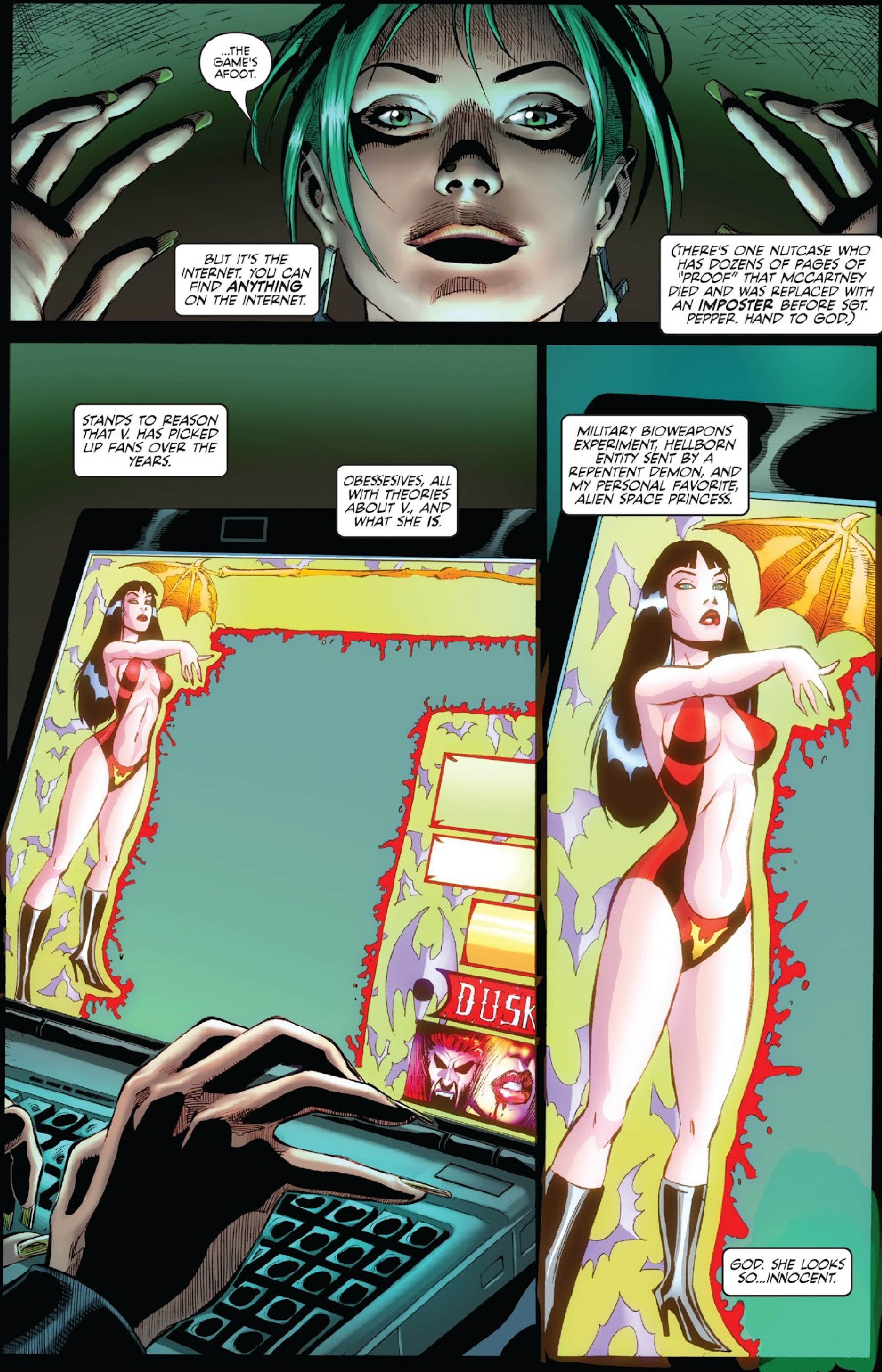

WHATEVER SHE WENT THROUGH IN THE SEATTLE UNDERGROUND, IT TOOK A HELL OF A TOLL.
NNNNNGGGH
(NO PUN INTENDED.)

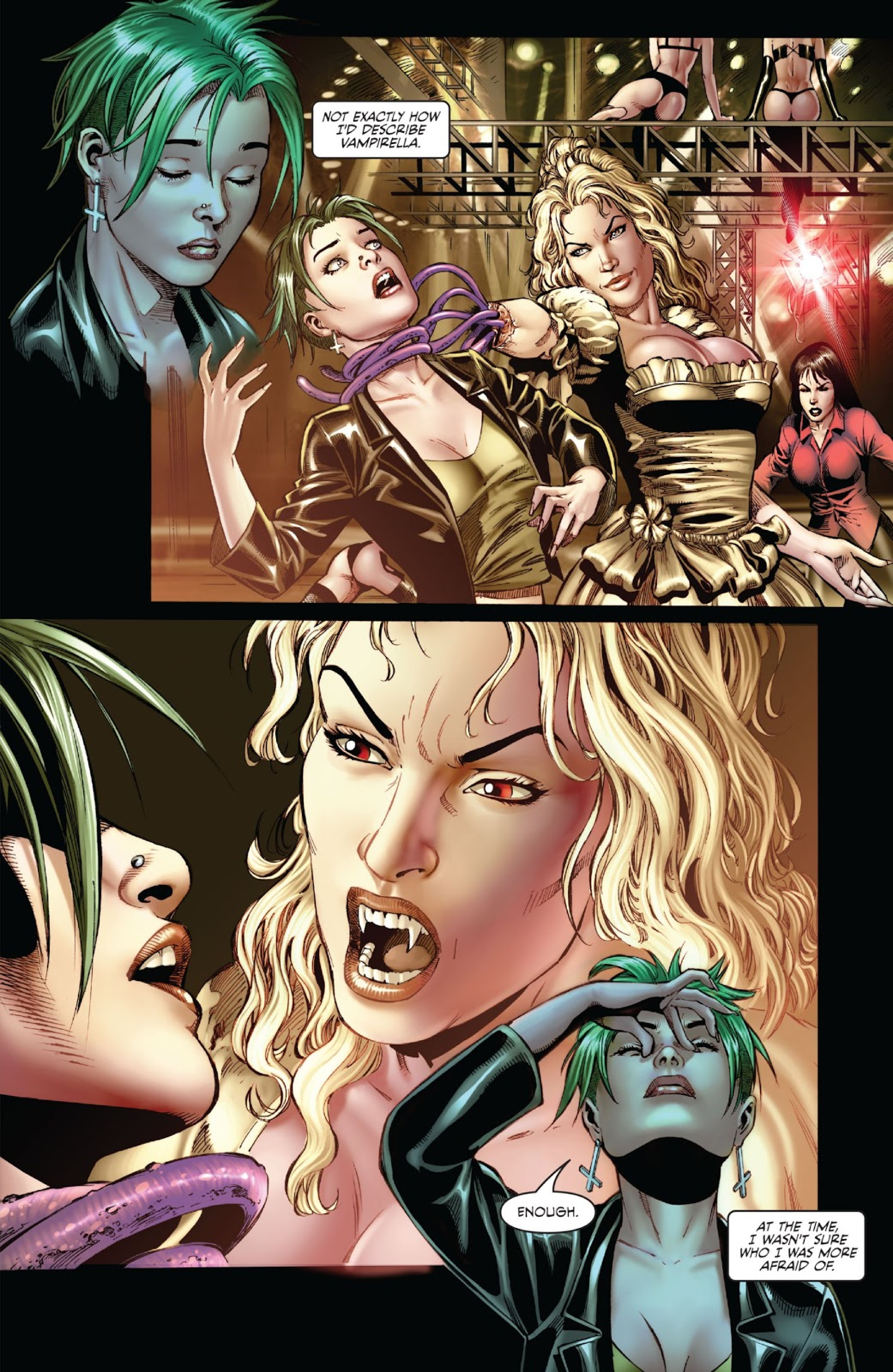

HARD TO WRAP MY BRAIN AROUND IT ALL.
VAMPIRES **EXIST**. LET'S JUST ROLL **THAT** AROUND FOR A WHILE, SOFIA.
THERE BE MONSTERS HERE.
SO, LET'S THINK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.
THERE ARE MONSTERS, BUT THEY CAN BE **KILLED**.
I'LL DRINK TO THAT.
LET'S REVIEW. SURVIVE A VAMPIRE ATTACK IN THE SEATTLE UNDERGROUND? **CHECK**.
HELP A SEVEN-FOOT TALL VAMPIRE WARRIOR BATTLE A TENTACLED HORROR FROM BEYOND SPACE AND TIME? **CHECK**.
JESUS.
WORST. WET BAR. EVER.

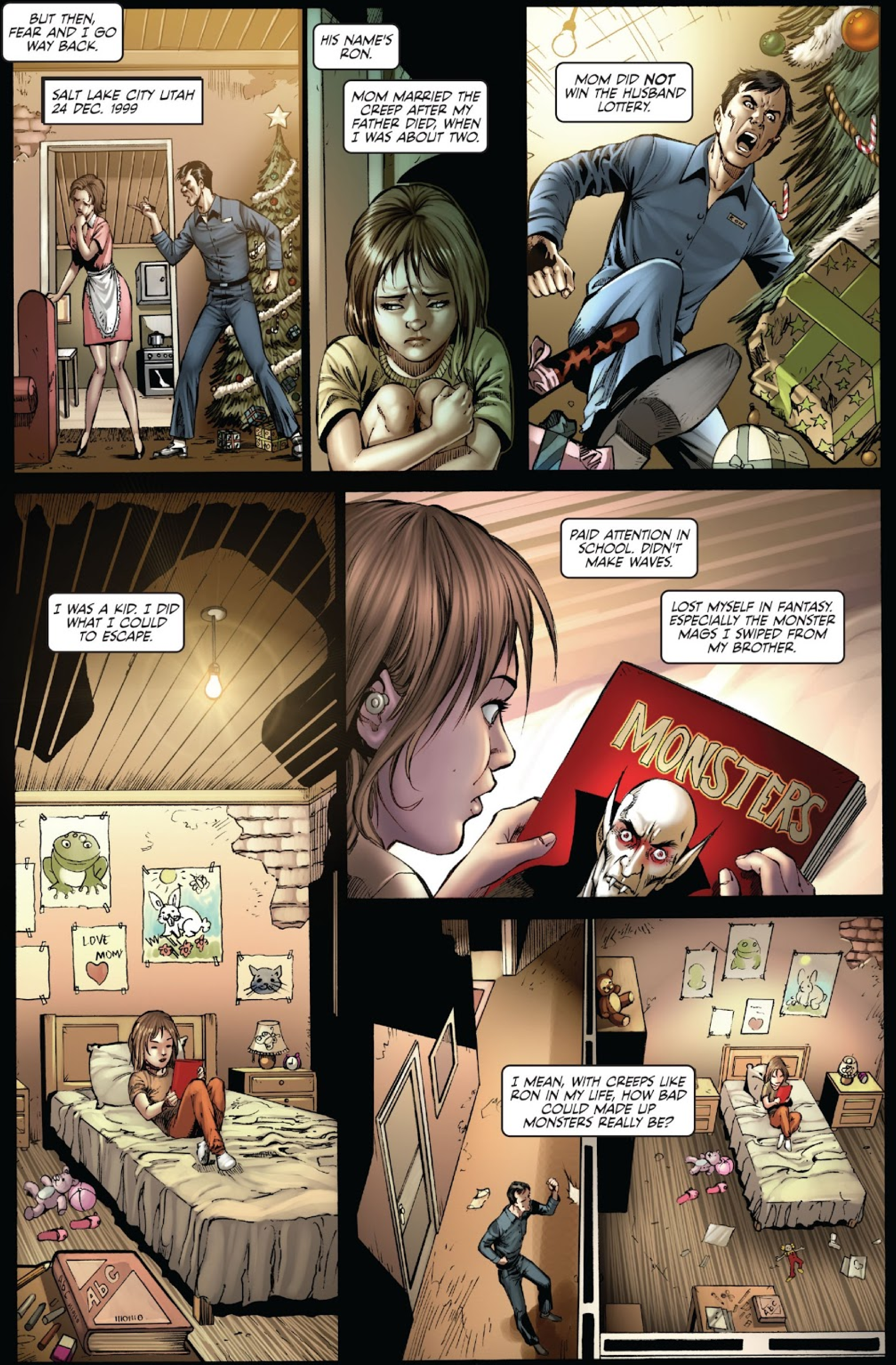

I SHOULD RELAX.
THE WORST IS BEHIND US NOW, RIGHT?
GULP
ALL THE MONSTERS ARE **DEAD**.
WELL, ***ALMOST*** ALL OF THEM.
SLEEP WELL, V. YOU ***EARNED*** IT.

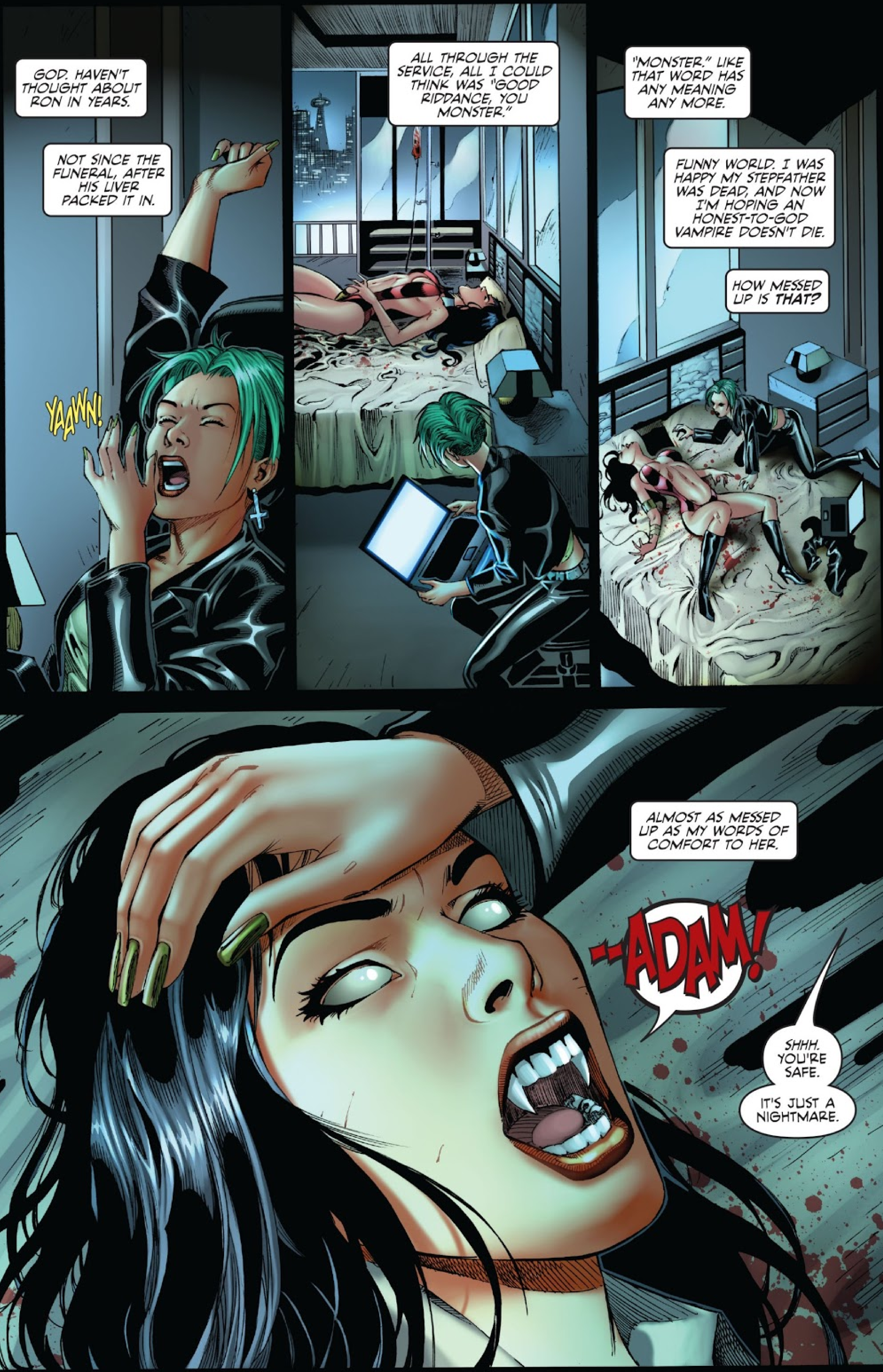

I KILLED THE BOTTLE, TOO, AND V. HAS BURNED THROUGH THREE UNITS OF WHOLE BLOOD.
BOTTOMS UP, V.
(MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY BROUGHT TO YOU BY ENDLESS RE-RUNS OF MEDICAL DRAMAS.)
SHE'S BEAUTIFUL. LIKE, SUPERMODEL BEAUTIFUL.
IT ALMOST MAKES YOU FORGET WHAT SHE IS.
ALMOST.

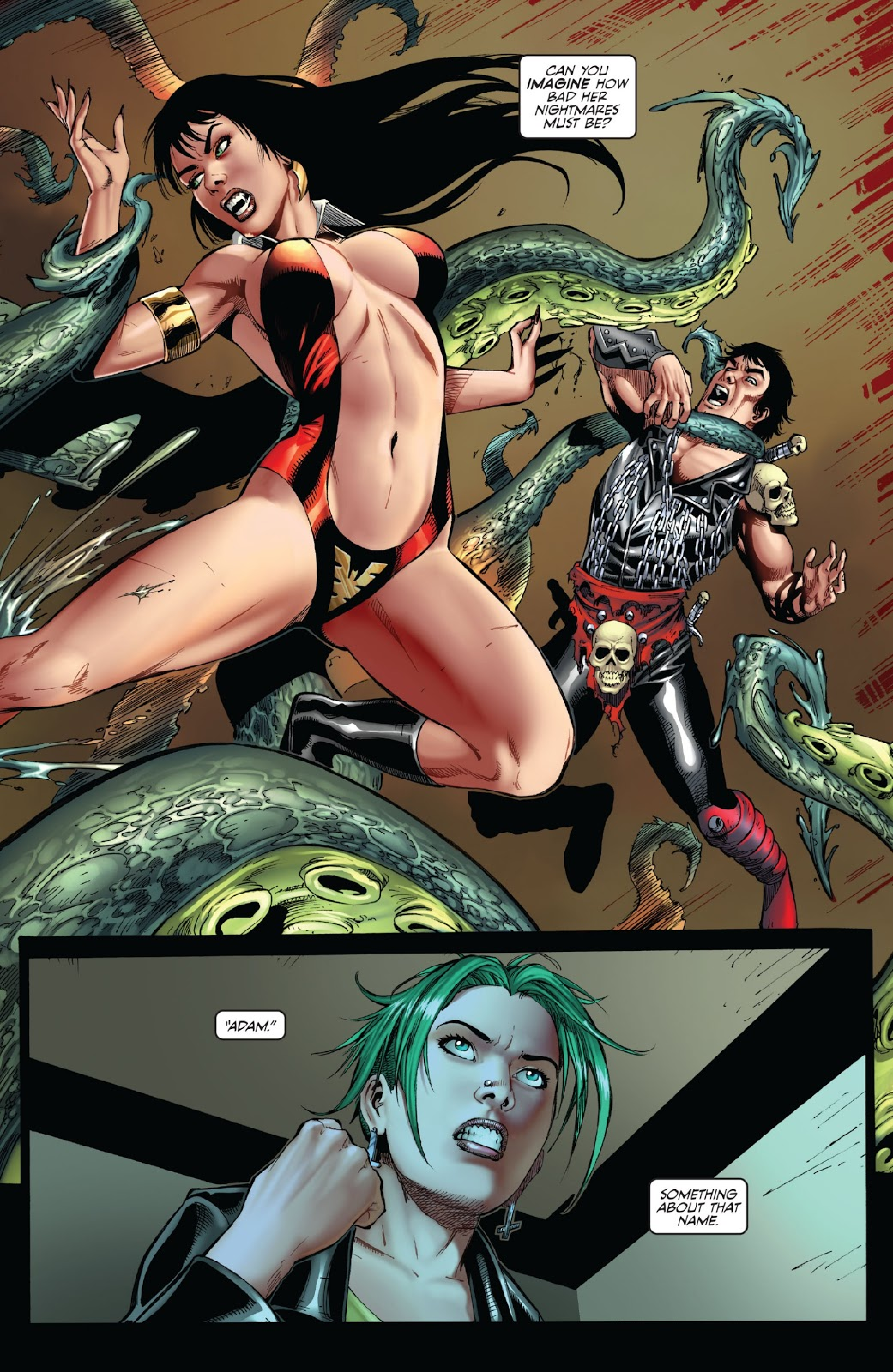

SOMETHING ABOUT HER MAKES THE HAIR ON MY ARMS STAND ON END.
LIKE, NO MATTER HOW BEAUTIFUL SHE IS, YOU INSTINCTIVELY KNOW SHE IS NOT HUMAN.
JUST LIKE I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT HER.
WEBSEARCH.GLOBAL.NET
WEB Search
WEB IMAGES VIDEOS NOTICES SHOPPING MORE
OCCULT
WEIRD
UNSOLVED
GRAVE ROBBING
ALL RIGHT, V. LET'S FIND OUT WHO YOU REALLY ARE.
WHAT A SURPRISE.
THERE'S NOT A LOT OF INFORMATION AVAILABLE.
IT TAKES SOME SEARCH-FU, AND A LOT OF READING BETWEEN THE LINES.
MOSTLY, UNSOLVED HOMICIDES AND ARSONS, USUALLY WITH AN ELEMENT OF THE WEIRD.
WHACKO WEBSITES THAT NO ONE TAKES SERIOUSLY, TALKING ABOUT UNDEAD PRUSSIAN SOLDIERS, DEMON HENCHMEN, AND (OF COURSE) VAMPIRES.
NAMES LIKE "FATTONI" AND "VON KRIEST" AND "NYX."
WEIRD STORIES GOING BACK TO THE 1960S.

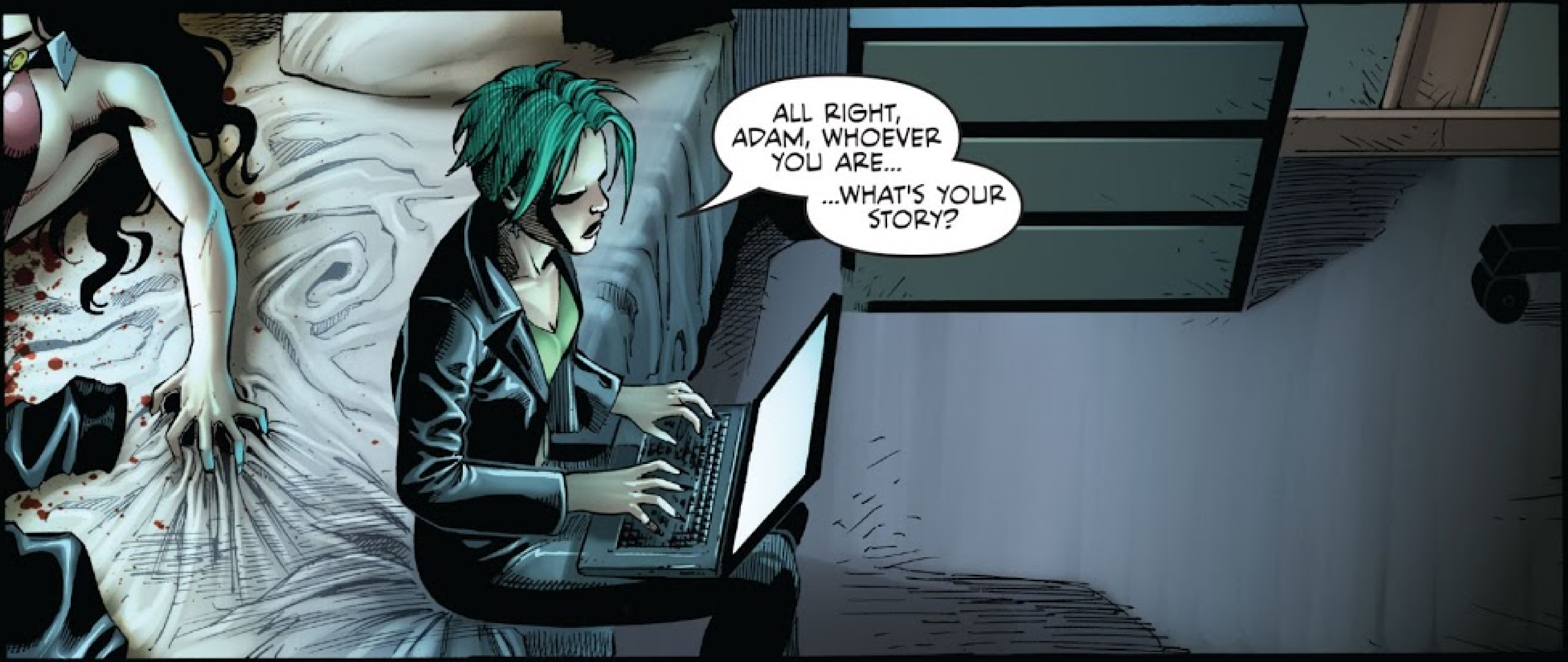

...THE GAME'S AFOOT.
BUT IT'S THE INTERNET. YOU CAN FIND **ANYTHING** ON THE INTERNET.
(THERE'S ONE NUTCASE WHO HAS DOZENS OF PAGES OF "PROOF" THAT MCCARTNEY DIED AND WAS REPLACED WITH AN **IMPOSTER** BEFORE SGT. PEPPER. HAND TO GOD.)
STANDS TO REASON THAT V. HAS PICKED UP FANS OVER THE YEARS.
OBESSESIVES, ALL WITH THEORIES ABOUT V., AND WHAT SHE **IS**.
DUSK
MILITARY BIOWEAPONS EXPERIMENT, HELLBORN ENTITY SENT BY A REPENTENT DEMON, AND MY PERSONAL FAVORITE, ALIEN SPACE PRINCESS.
GOD. SHE LOOKS SO...INNOCENT.

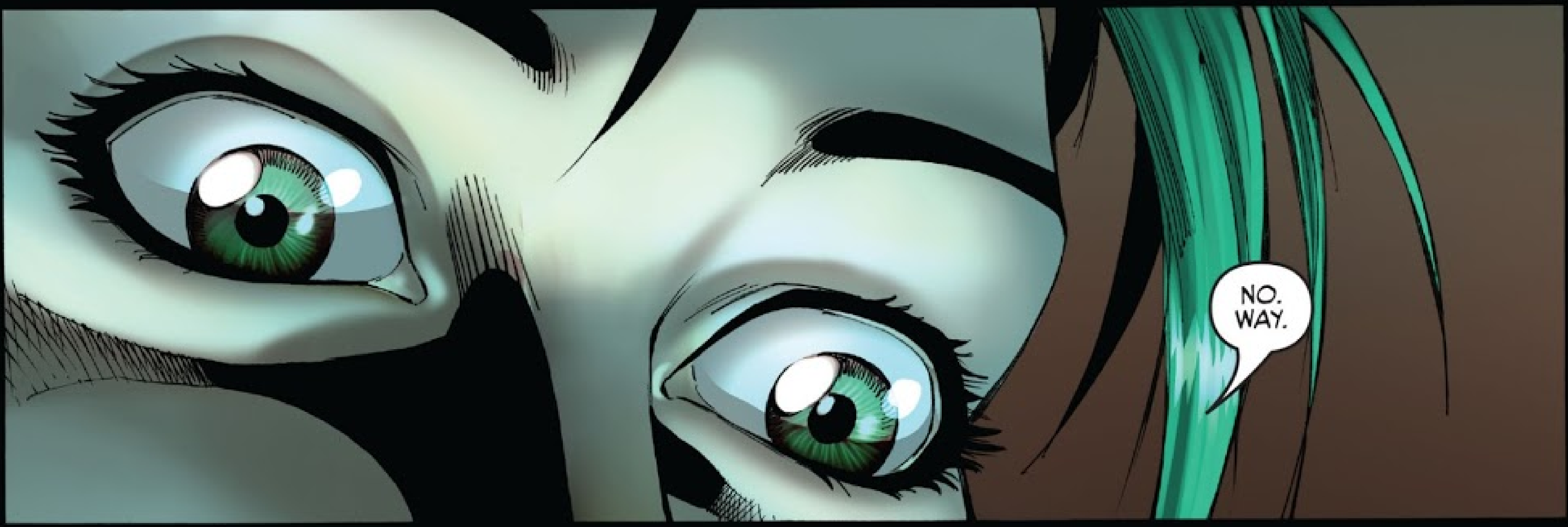

NOT EXACTLY HOW I'D DESCRIBE VAMPIRELLA.
ENOUGH.
AT THE TIME, I WASN'T SURE WHO I WAS MORE AFRAID OF.

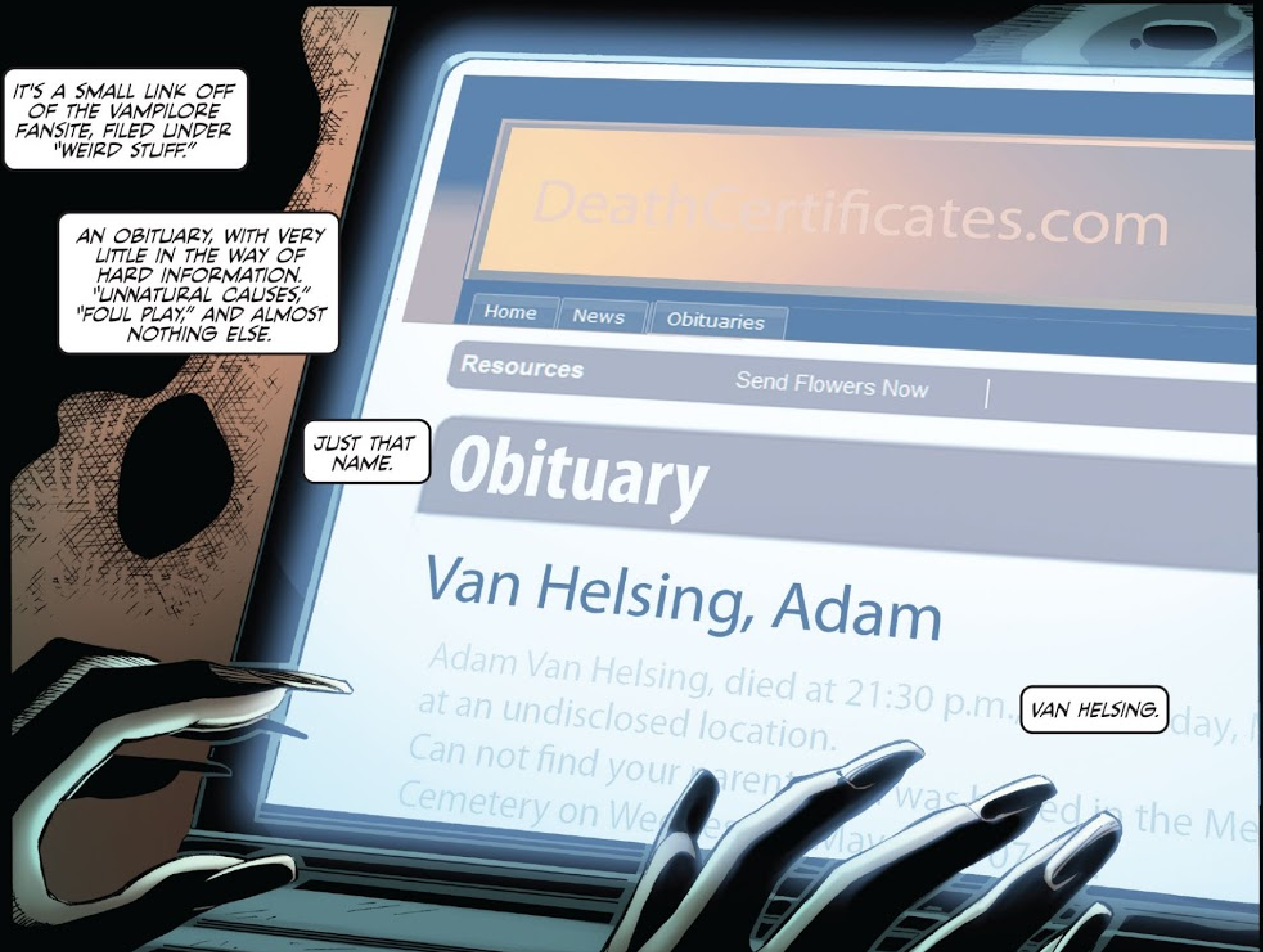

BUT THEN, FEAR AND I GO WAY BACK.
SALT LAKE CITY UTAH 24 DEC. 1999
HIS NAME'S RON.
MOM MARRIED THE CREEP AFTER MY FATHER DIED, WHEN I WAS ABOUT TWO.
MOM DID **NOT** WIN THE HUSBAND LOTTERY.
RON
I WAS A KID. I DID WHAT I COULD TO ESCAPE.
LOVE MOM
AbC
PAID ATTENTION IN SCHOOL. DIDN'T MAKE WAVES.
LOST MYSELF IN FANTASY. ESPECIALLY THE MONSTER MAGS I SWIPED FROM MY BROTHER.
MONSTERS
I MEAN, WITH CREEPS LIKE RON IN MY LIFE, HOW BAD COULD MADE UP MONSTERS REALLY BE?

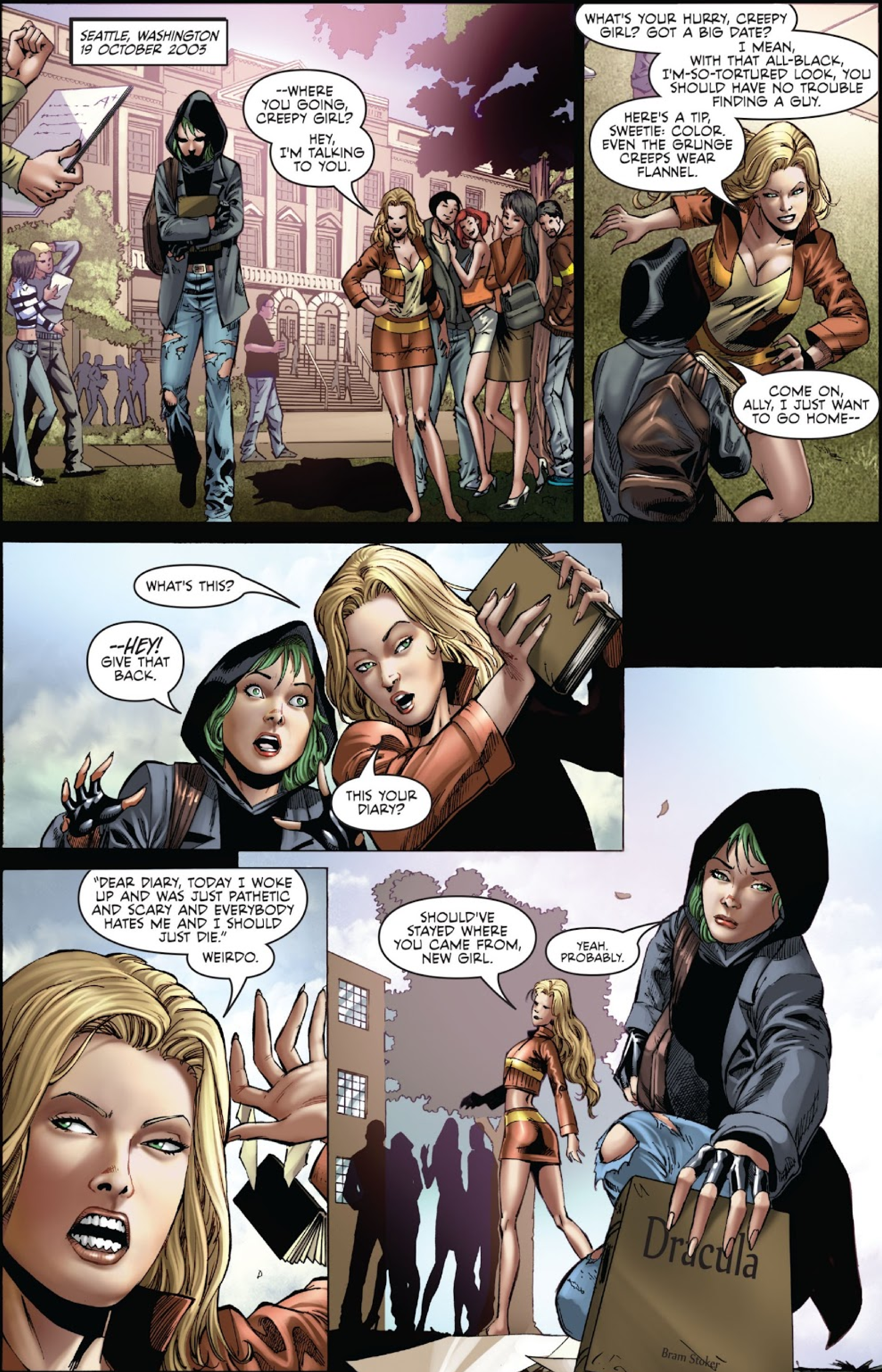

GOD. HAVEN'T THOUGHT ABOUT RON IN YEARS.
NOT SINCE THE FUNERAL, AFTER HIS LIVER PACKED IT IN.
YAAWN!
ALL THROUGH THE SERVICE, ALL I COULD THINK WAS "GOOD RIDDANCE, YOU MONSTER."
"MONSTER." LIKE THAT WORD HAS ANY MEANING ANY MORE.
FUNNY WORLD. I WAS HAPPY MY STEPFATHER WAS DEAD, AND NOW I'M HOPING AN HONEST-TO-GOD VAMPIRE DOESN'T DIE.
HOW MESSED UP IS **THAT?**
ALMOST AS MESSED UP AS MY WORDS OF COMFORT TO HER.
--ADAM!
SHHH. YOU'RE SAFE.
IT'S JUST A NIGHTMARE.

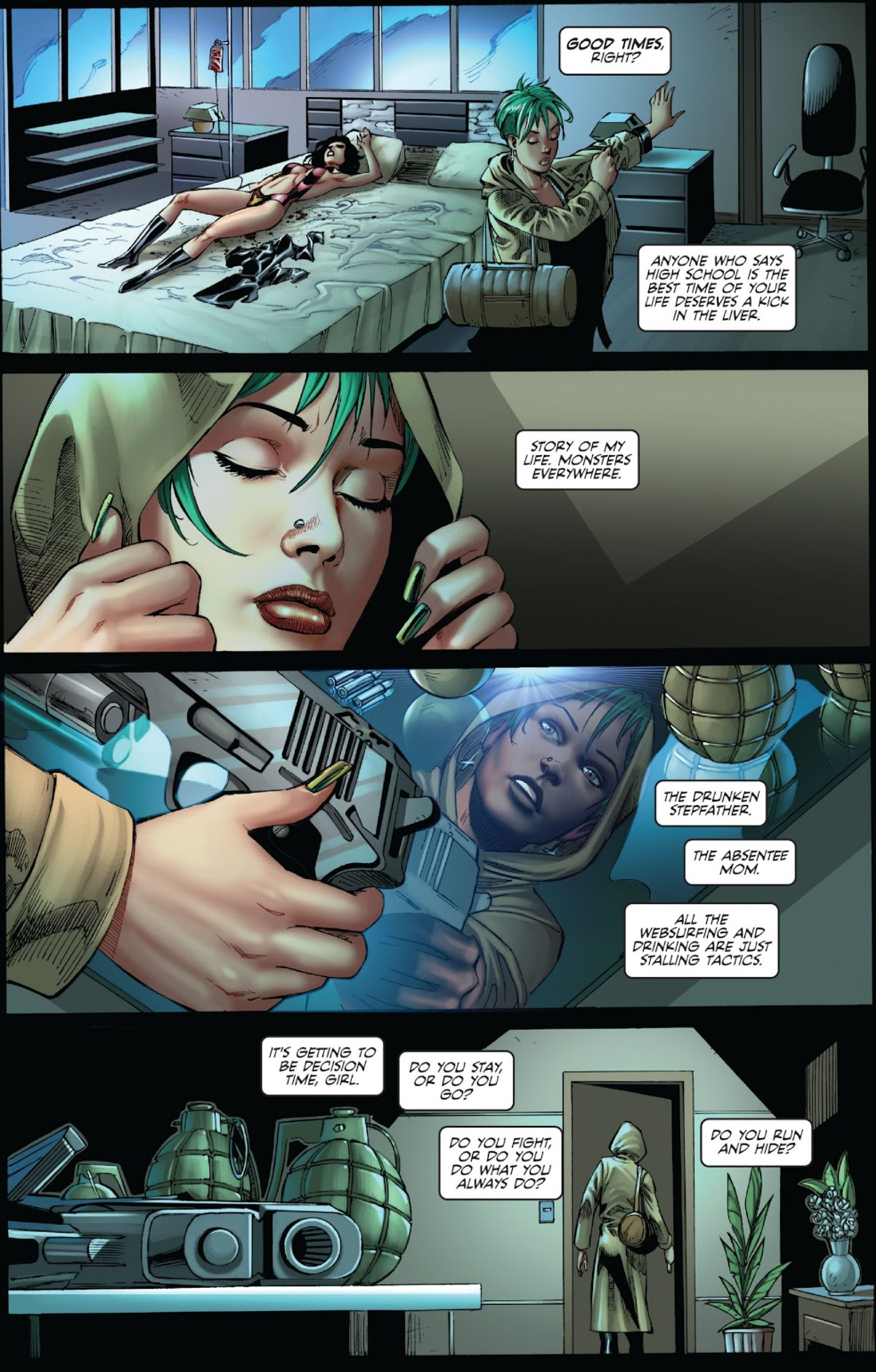

CAN YOU **IMAGINE** HOW BAD HER NIGHTMARES MUST BE?
"ADAM."
SOMETHING ABOUT THAT NAME.

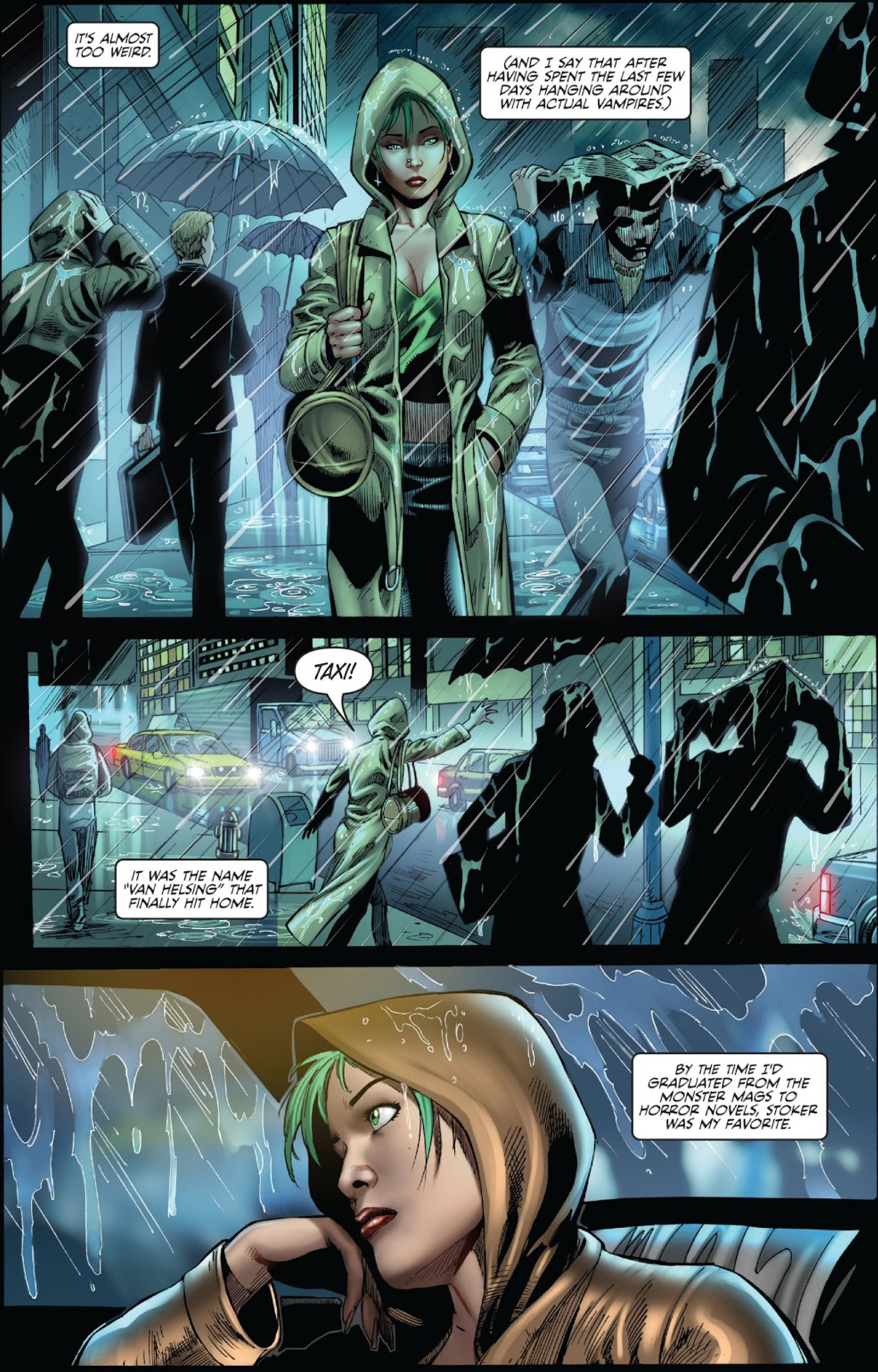

ALL RIGHT, ADAM, WHOEVER YOU ARE...
...WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

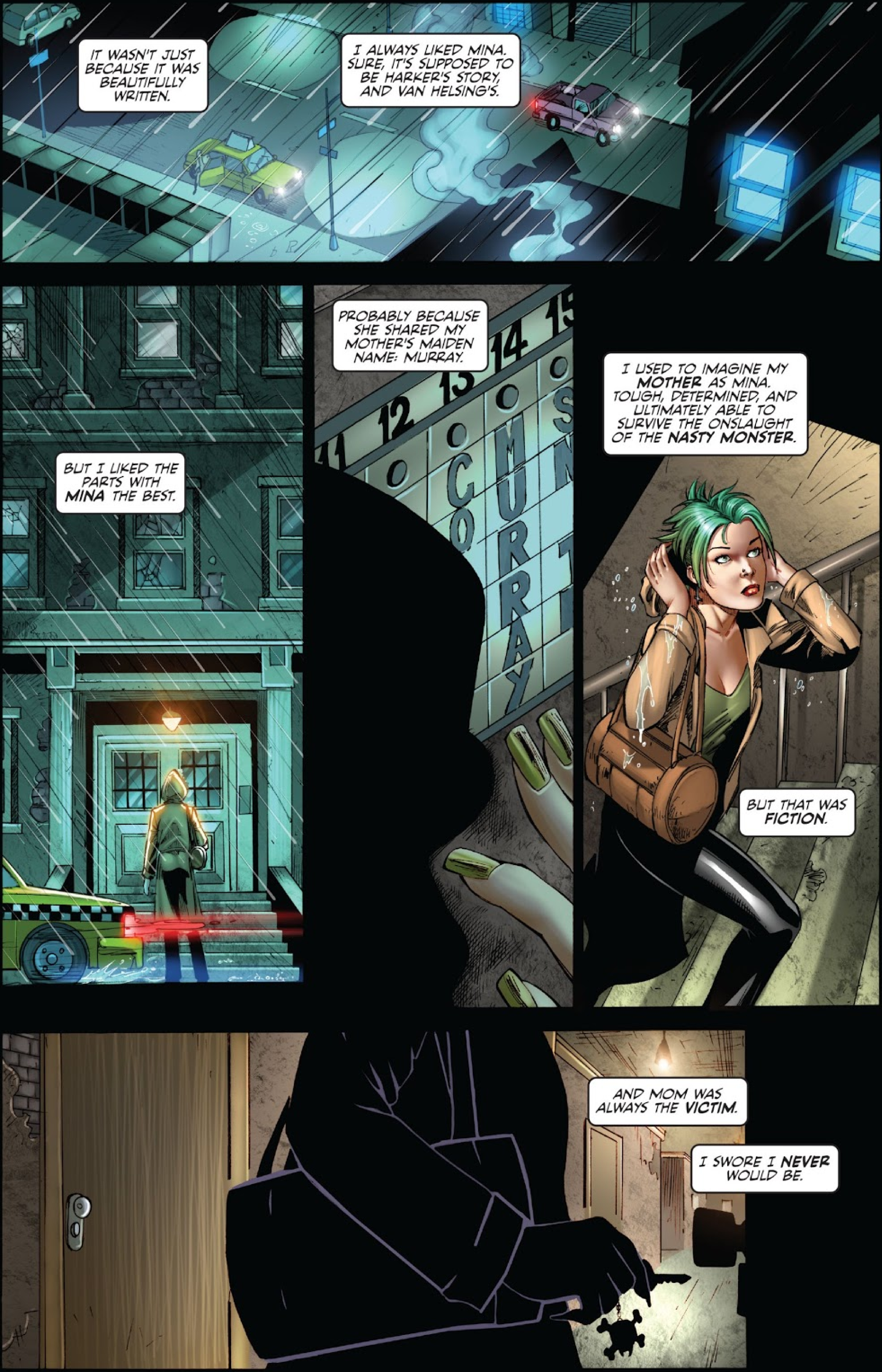

NO. WAY.

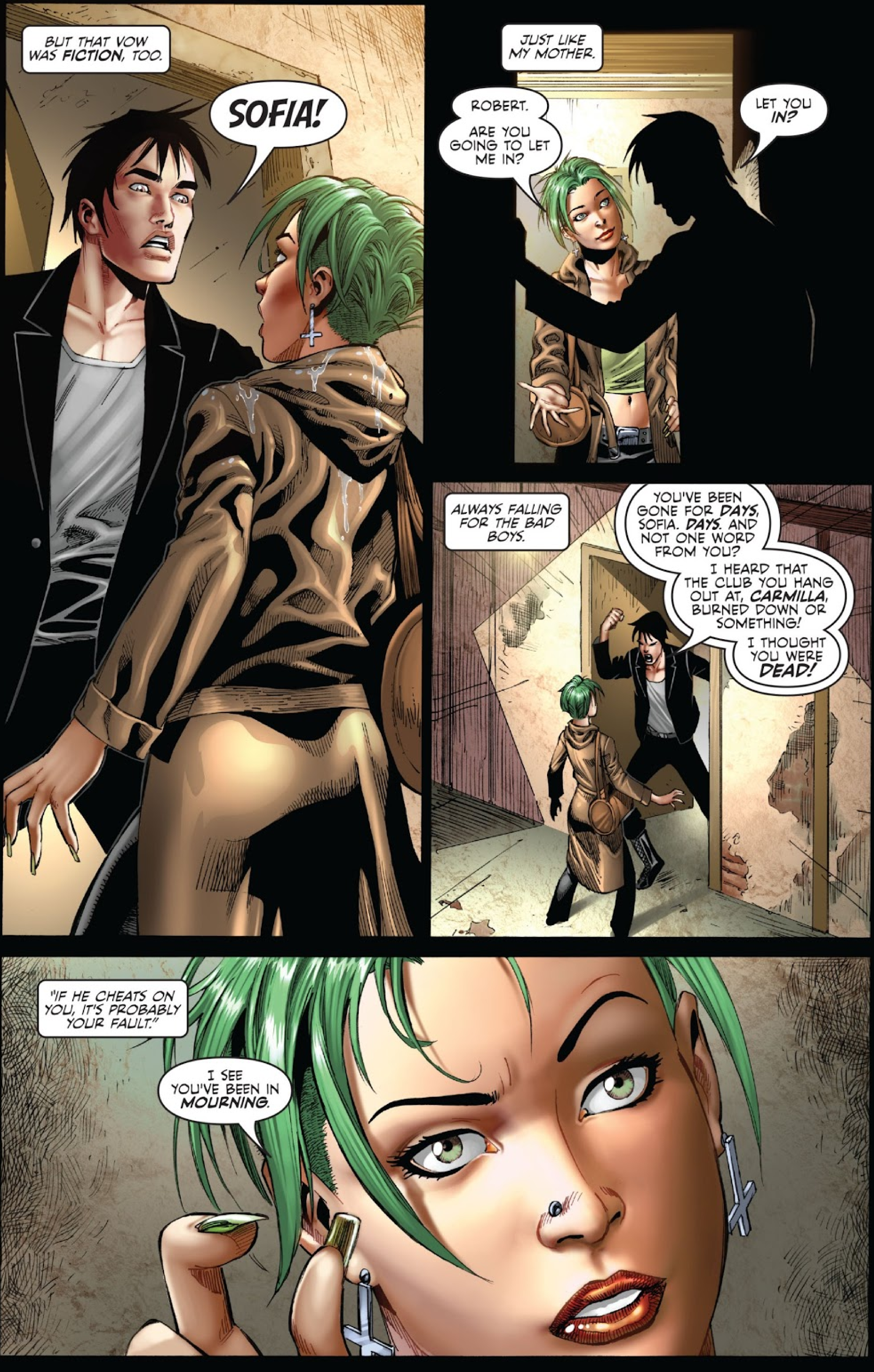

IT'S A SMALL LINK OFF OF THE VAMPILORE FANSITE, FILED UNDER "WEIRD STUFF."
AN OBITUARY, WITH VERY LITTLE IN THE WAY OF HARD INFORMATION. "UNNATURAL CAUSES," "FOUL PLAY," AND ALMOST NOTHING ELSE.
JUST THAT NAME.
VAN HELSING.
DeathCertificates.com
Home
News
Obituaries
Resources
Send Flowers Now
Obituary
Van Helsing, Adam
Adam Van Helsing, died at 21:30 p.m.
at an undisclosed location.

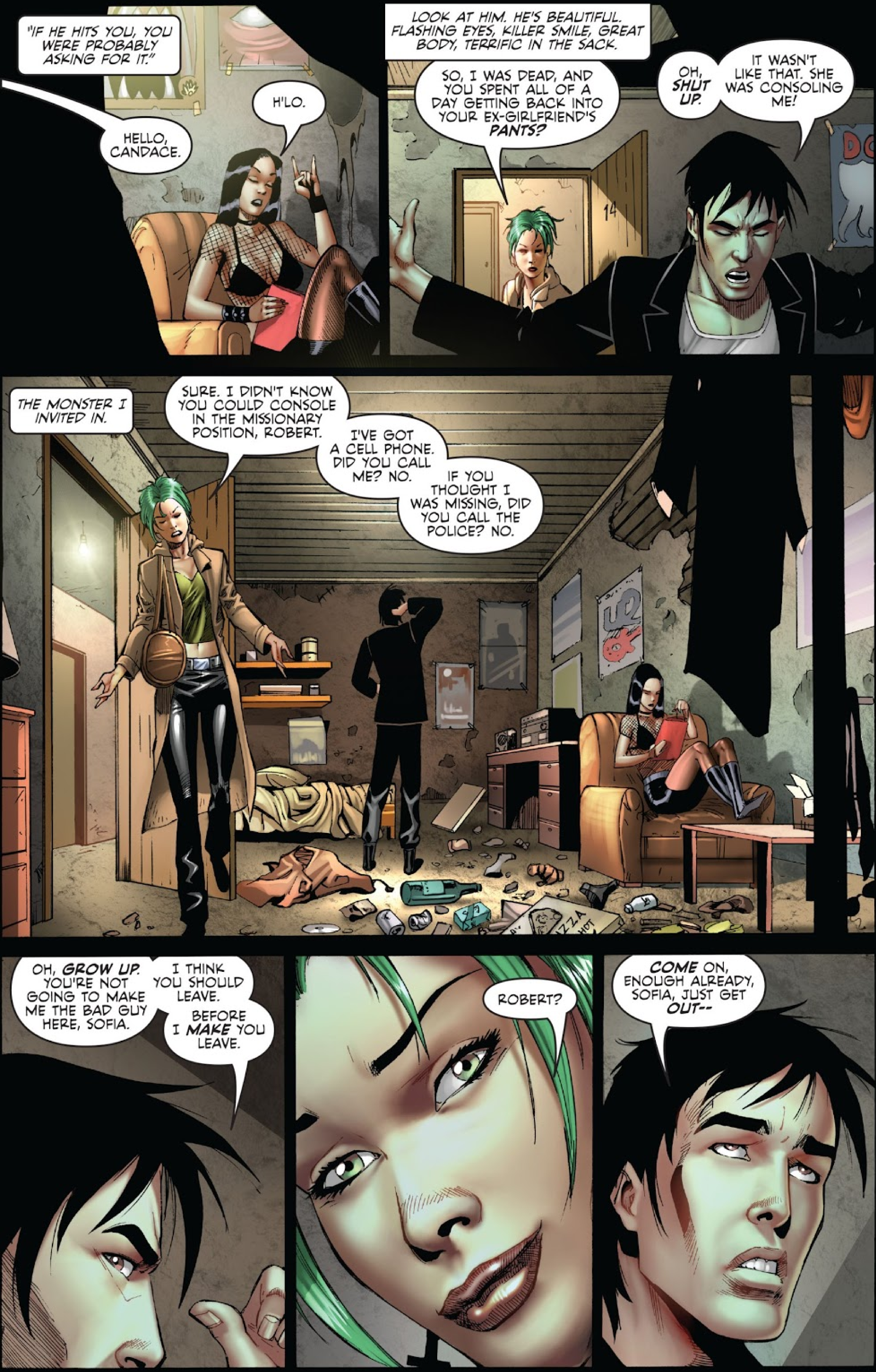

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
19 OCTOBER 2003
A+
--WHERE YOU GOING, CREEPY GIRL?
HEY, I'M TALKING TO YOU.
WHAT'S YOUR HURRY, CREEPY GIRL? GOT A BIG DATE?
I MEAN, WITH THAT ALL-BLACK, I'M-SO-TORTURED LOOK, YOU SHOULD HAVE NO TROUBLE FINDING A GUY.
HERE'S A TIP, SWEETIE: COLOR. EVEN THE GRUNGE CREEPS WEAR FLANNEL.
COME ON, ALLY, I JUST WANT TO GO HOME--
WHAT'S THIS?
--HEY! GIVE THAT BACK.
THIS YOUR DIARY?
"DEAR DIARY, TODAY I WOKE UP AND WAS JUST PATHETIC AND SCARY AND EVERYBODY HATES ME AND I SHOULD JUST DIE."
WEIRDO.
SHOULD'VE STAYED WHERE YOU CAME FROM, NEW GIRL.
YEAH. PROBABLY.
Dracula
Bram Stoker

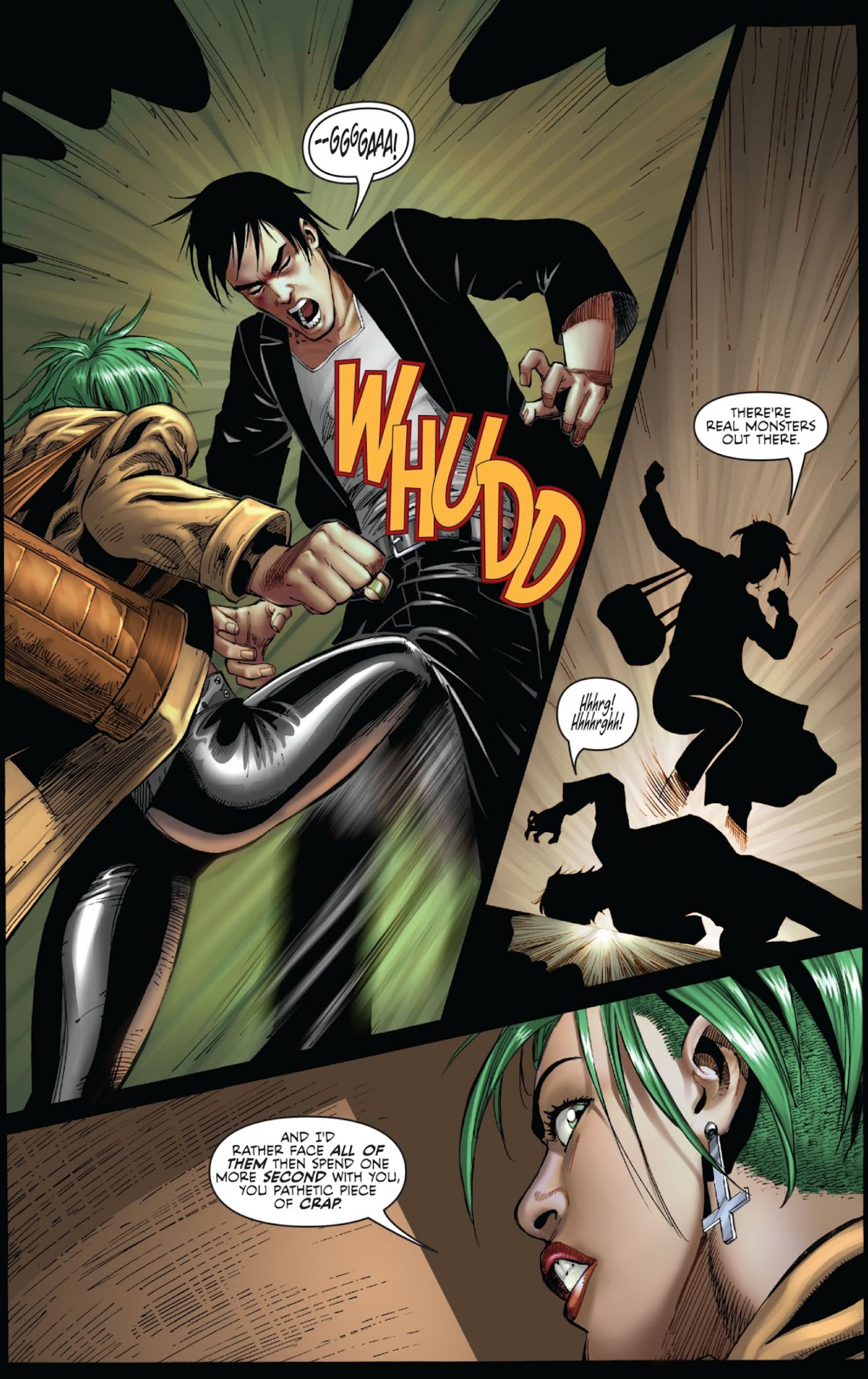

GOOD TIMES, RIGHT?
ANYONE WHO SAYS HIGH SCHOOL IS THE BEST TIME OF YOUR LIFE DESERVES A KICK IN THE LIVER.
STORY OF MY LIFE. MONSTERS EVERYWHERE.
THE DRUNKEN STEPFATHER.
THE ABSENTEE MOM.
ALL THE WEBSURFING AND DRINKING ARE JUST STALLING TACTICS.
IT'S GETTING TO BE DECISION TIME, GIRL.
DO YOU STAY, OR DO YOU GO?
DO YOU FIGHT, OR DO YOU DO WHAT YOU ALWAYS DO?
DO YOU RUN AND HIDE?

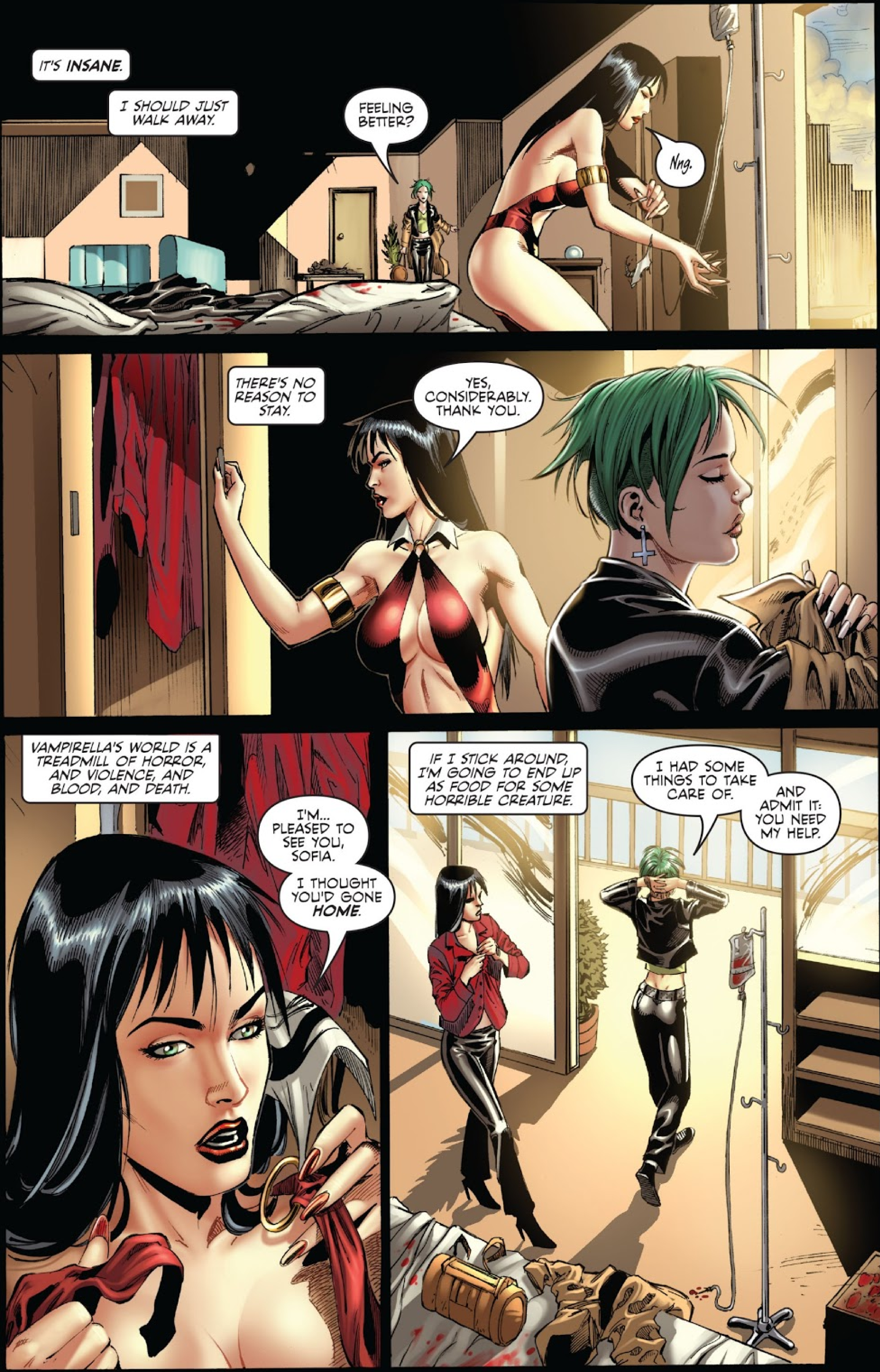

IT'S ALMOST TOO WEIRD.
(AND I SAY THAT AFTER HAVING SPENT THE LAST FEW DAYS HANGING AROUND WITH ACTUAL VAMPIRES.)
TAXI!
IT WAS THE NAME "VAN HELSING" THAT FINALLY HIT HOME.
BY THE TIME I'D GRADUATED FROM THE MONSTER MAGS TO HORROR NOVELS, STOKER WAS MY FAVORITE.

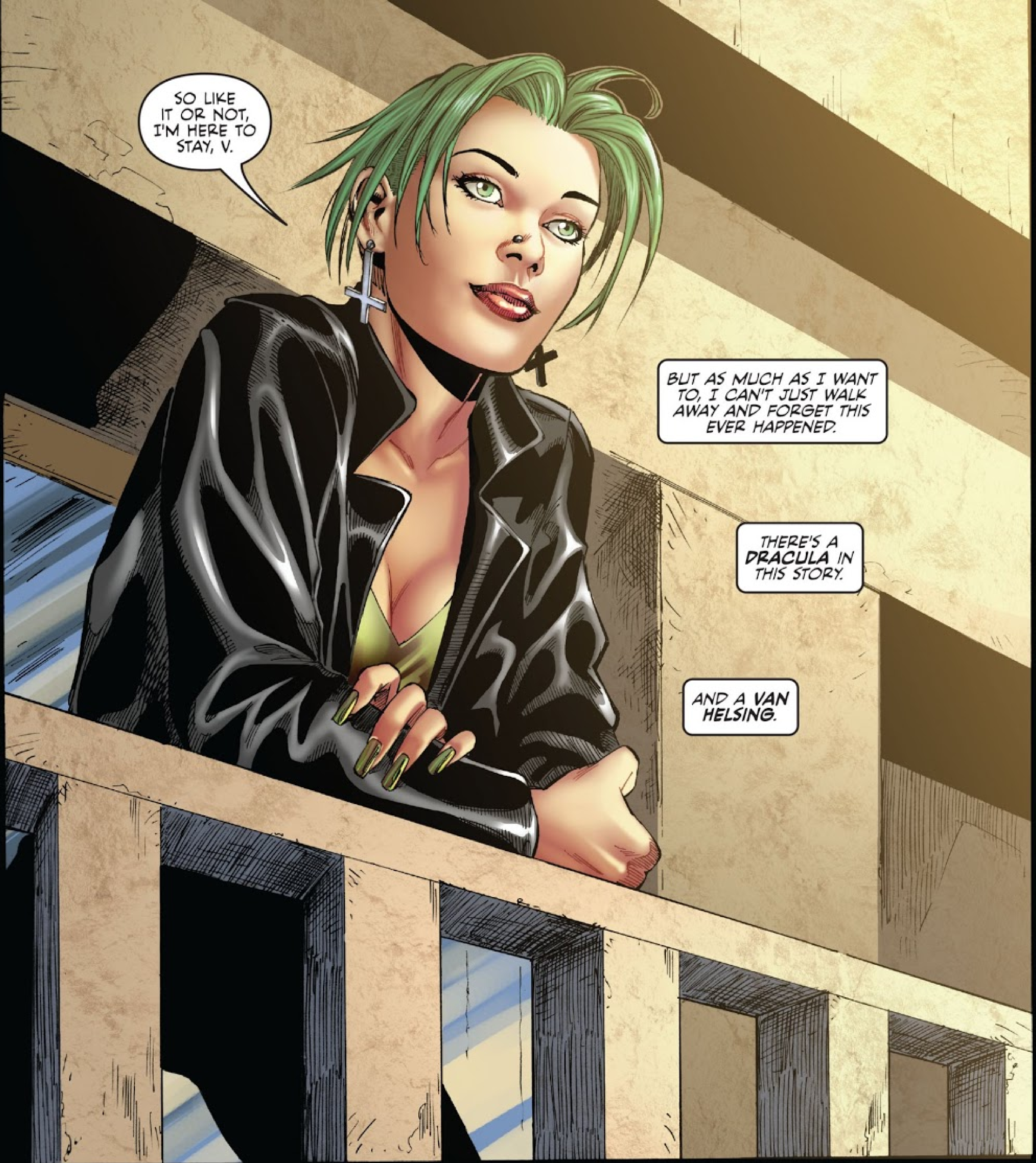

IT WASN'T JUST BECAUSE IT WAS BEAUTIFULLY WRITTEN.
I ALWAYS LIKED MINA. SURE, IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE HARKER'S STORY, AND VAN HELSING'S.
BUT I LIKED THE PARTS WITH **MINA** THE BEST.
PROBABLY BECAUSE SHE SHARED MY MOTHER'S MAIDEN NAME: MURRAY.
11 12 13 14 15
MURRAY
I USED TO IMAGINE MY **MOTHER** AS MINA. TOUGH, DETERMINED, AND ULTIMATELY ABLE TO SURVIVE THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE **NASTY MONSTER**.
BUT THAT WAS **FICTION**.
AND MOM WAS ALWAYS THE **VICTIM**.
I SWORE I **NEVER** WOULD BE.

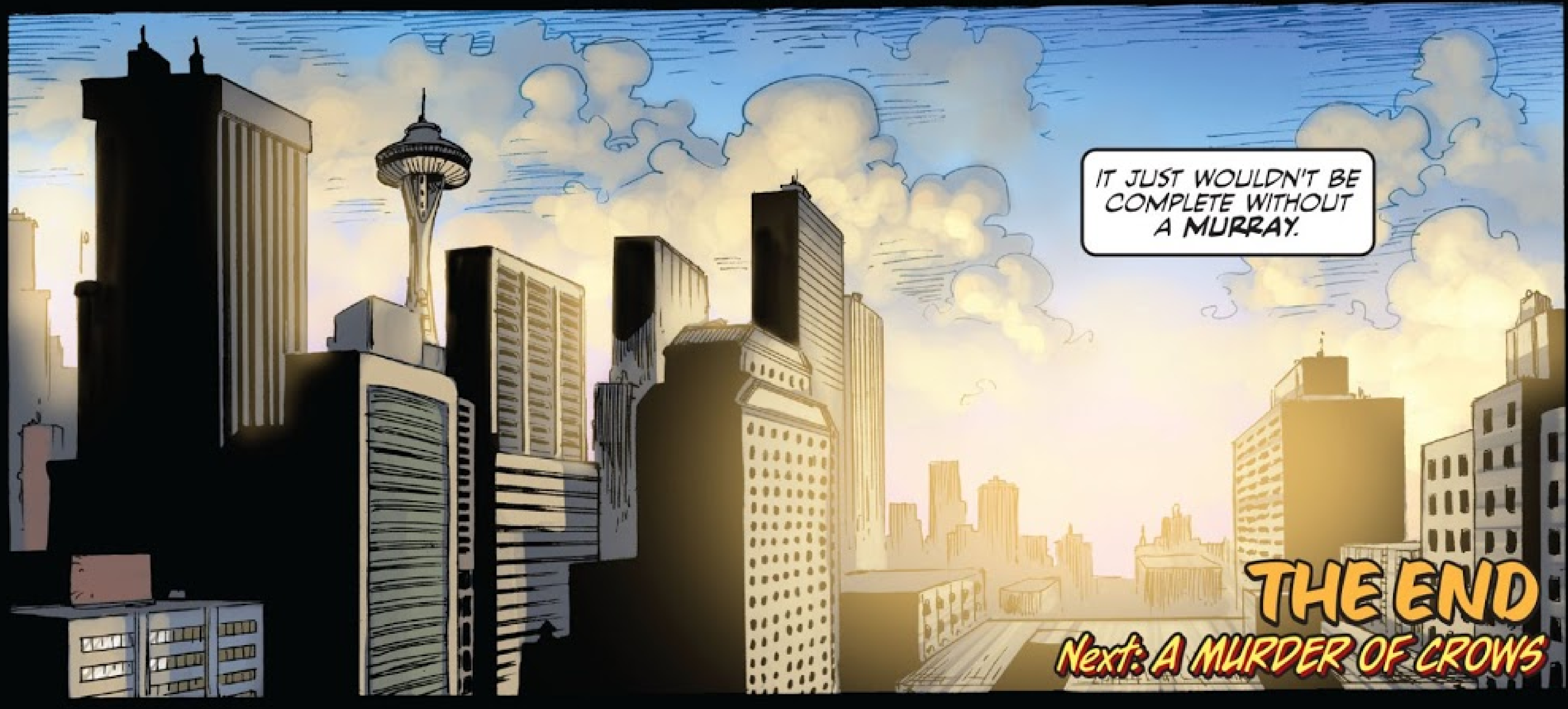

BUT THAT VOW WAS FICTION, TOO.
SOFIA!
JUST LIKE MY MOTHER.
ROBERT.
ARE YOU GOING TO LET ME IN?
LET YOU IN?
ALWAYS FALLING FOR THE BAD BOYS.
YOU'VE BEEN GONE FOR DAYS, SOFIA. DAYS. AND NOT ONE WORD FROM YOU?
I HEARD THAT THE CLUB YOU HANG OUT AT, CARMILLA, BURNED DOWN OR SOMETHING!
I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
"IF HE CHEATS ON YOU, IT'S PROBABLY YOUR FAULT."
I SEE YOU'VE BEEN IN MOURNING.


"IF HE HITS YOU, YOU WERE PROBABLY ASKING FOR IT."
HELLO, CANDACE.
H'LO.
LOOK AT HIM. HE'S BEAUTIFUL. FLASHING EYES, KILLER SMILE, GREAT BODY, TERRIFIC IN THE SACK.
SO, I WAS DEAD, AND YOU SPENT ALL OF A DAY GETTING BACK INTO YOUR EX-GIRLFRIEND'S *PANTS?*
14
OH, ***SHUT UP.***
IT WASN'T LIKE THAT. SHE WAS CONSOLING ME!
THE MONSTER I INVITED IN.
SURE. I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD CONSOLE IN THE MISSIONARY POSITION, ROBERT.
I'VE GOT A CELL PHONE. DID YOU CALL ME? NO.
IF YOU THOUGHT I WAS MISSING, DID YOU CALL THE POLICE? NO.
U2
PIZZA
OH, ***GROW UP.*** YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE ME THE BAD GUY HERE, SOFIA.
I THINK YOU SHOULD LEAVE.
BEFORE I ***MAKE*** YOU LEAVE.
ROBERT?
COME ON, ENOUGH ALREADY, SOFIA, JUST GET ***OUT--***


--GGGGAAA!
WHUDD
THERE'RE REAL MONSTERS OUT THERE.
Hhhrg! Hhhhrghh!
AND I'D RATHER FACE ALL OF THEM THEN SPEND ONE MORE SECOND WITH YOU, YOU PATHETIC PIECE OF CRAP.


IT'S **INSANE**.
I SHOULD JUST WALK AWAY.
FEELING BETTER?
Nng.
THERE'S NO REASON TO STAY.
YES, CONSIDERABLY. THANK YOU.
VAMPIRELLA'S WORLD IS A TREADMILL OF HORROR, AND VIOLENCE, AND BLOOD, AND DEATH.
I'M... PLEASED TO SEE YOU, SOFIA.
I THOUGHT YOU'D GONE **HOME**.
IF I STICK AROUND, I'M GOING TO END UP AS FOOD FOR SOME HORRIBLE CREATURE.
I HAD SOME THINGS TO TAKE CARE OF.
AND ADMIT IT: YOU NEED MY HELP.


SO LIKE IT OR NOT, I'M HERE TO STAY, V.
BUT AS MUCH AS I WANT TO, I CAN'T JUST WALK AWAY AND FORGET THIS EVER HAPPENED.
THERE'S A **DRACULA** IN THIS STORY.
AND A **VAN HELSING**.


IT JUST WOULDN'T BE COMPLETE WITHOUT A **MURRAY**.
THE END
Next: A MURDER OF CROWS

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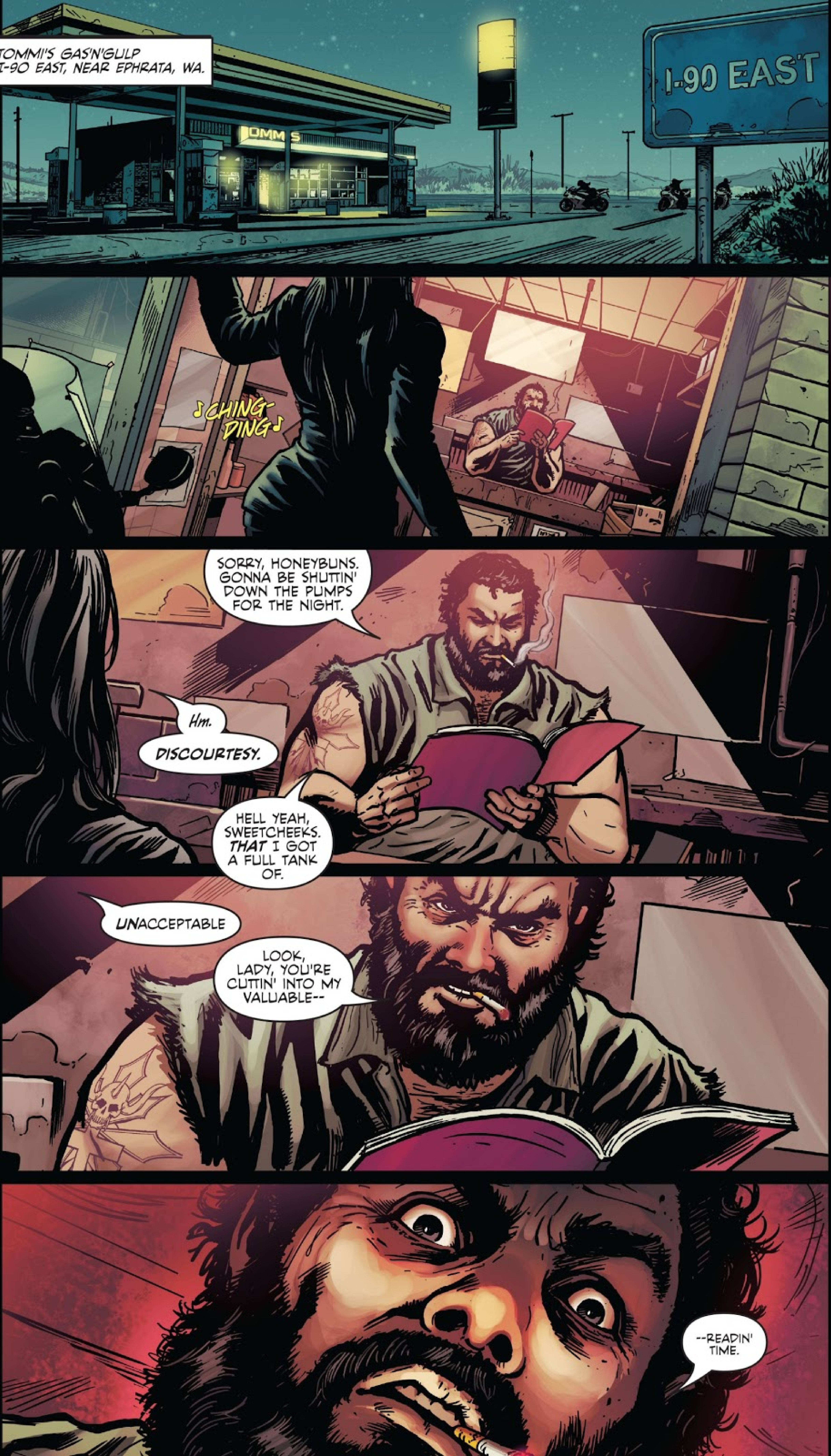
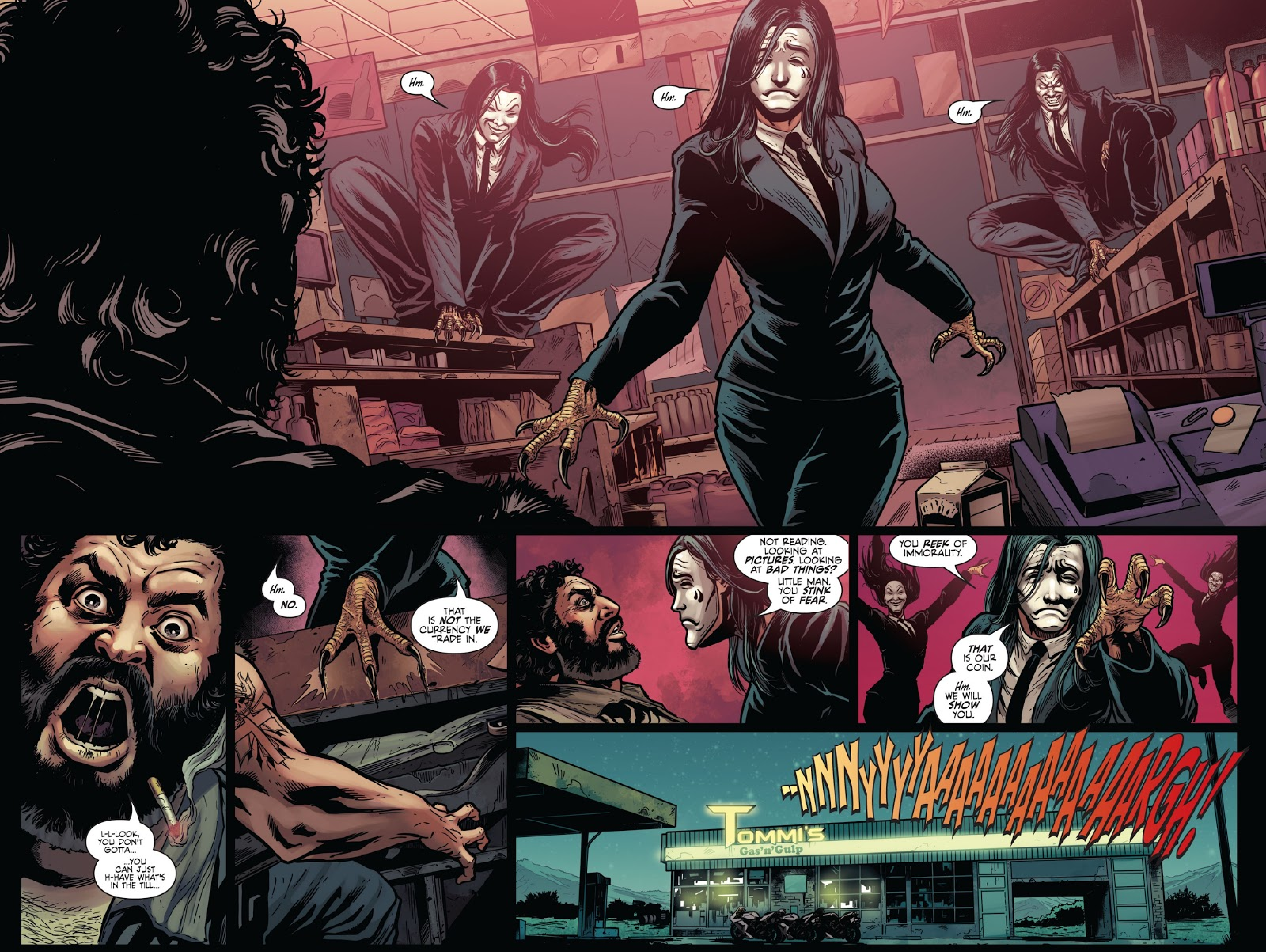
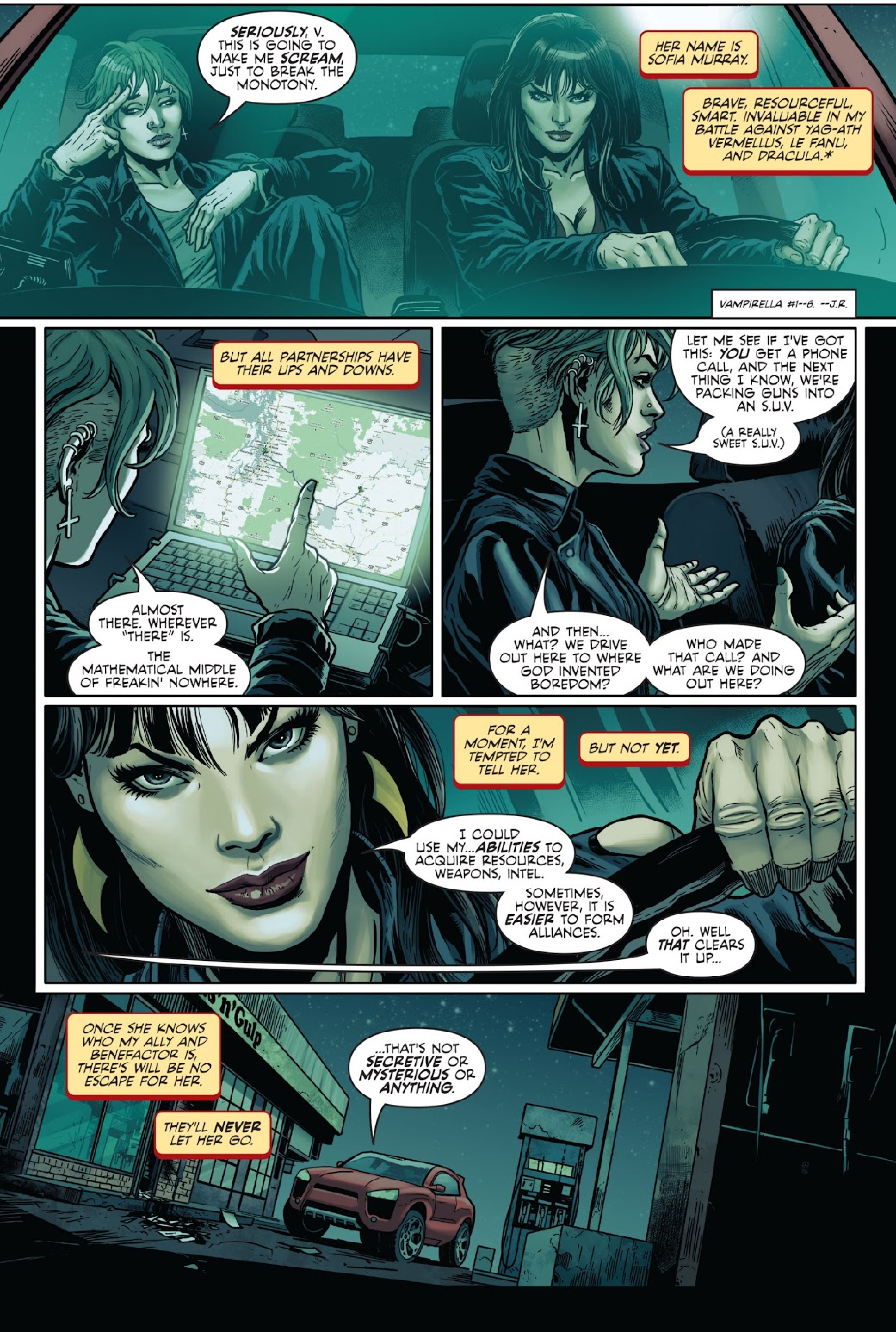
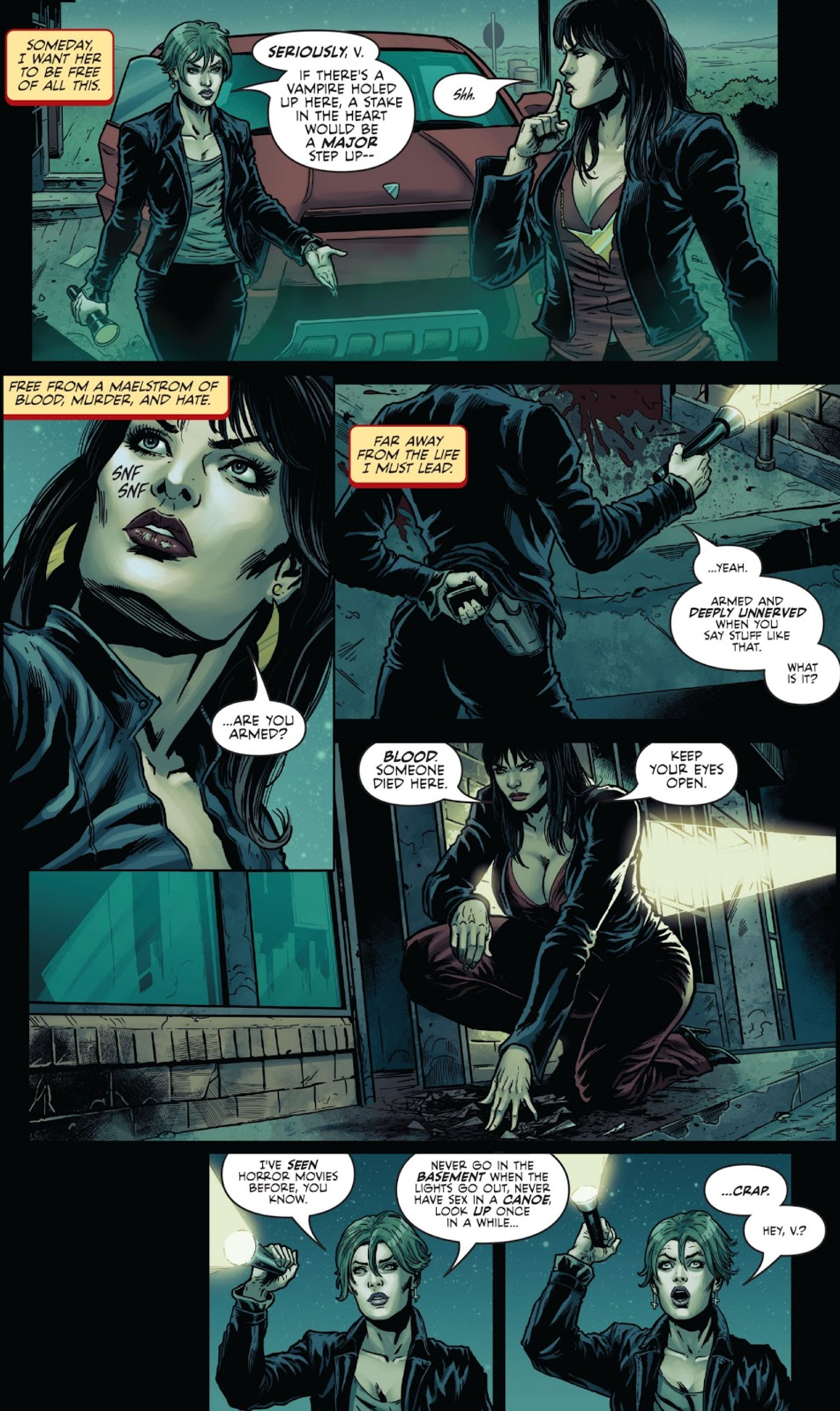
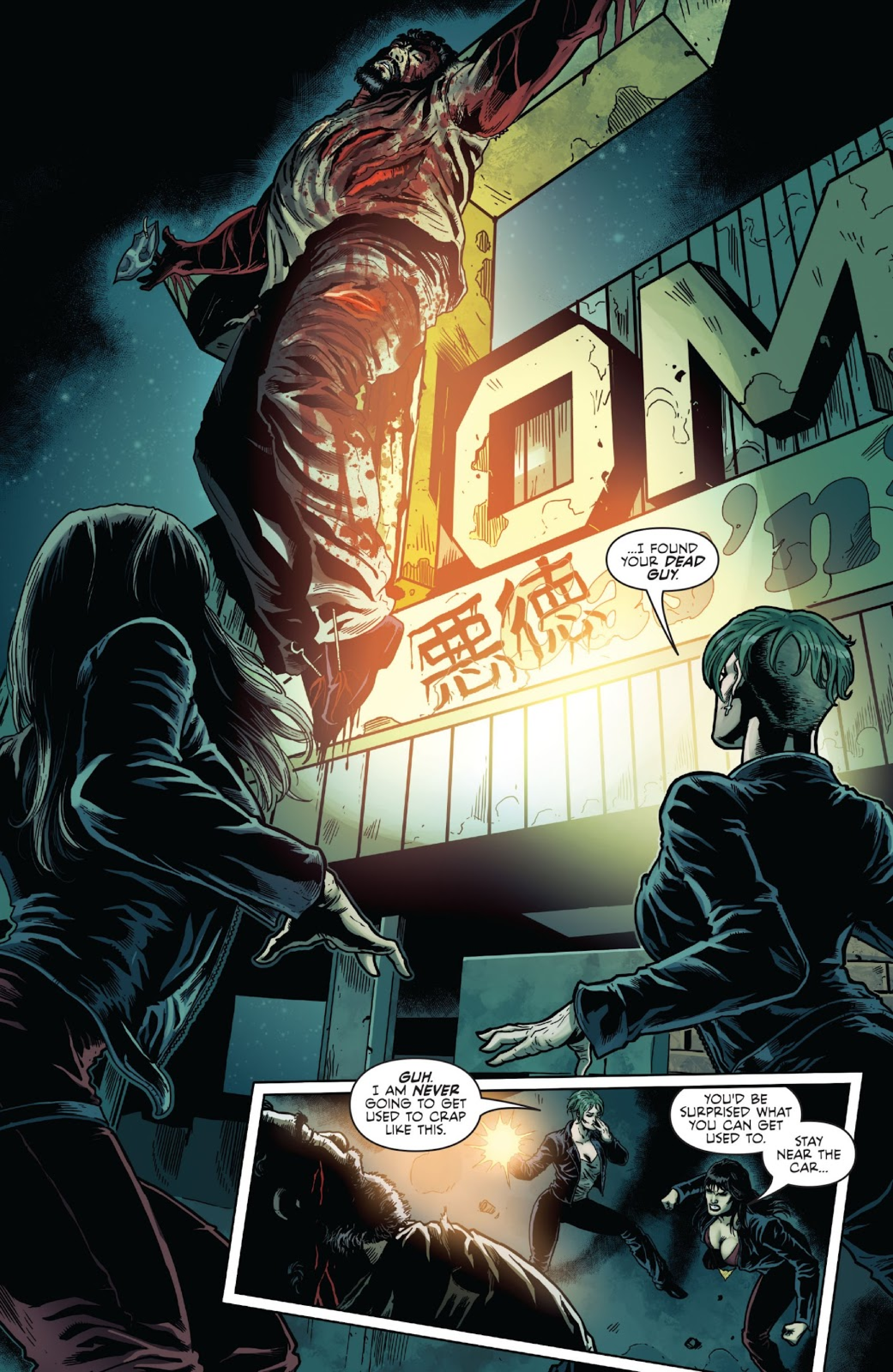
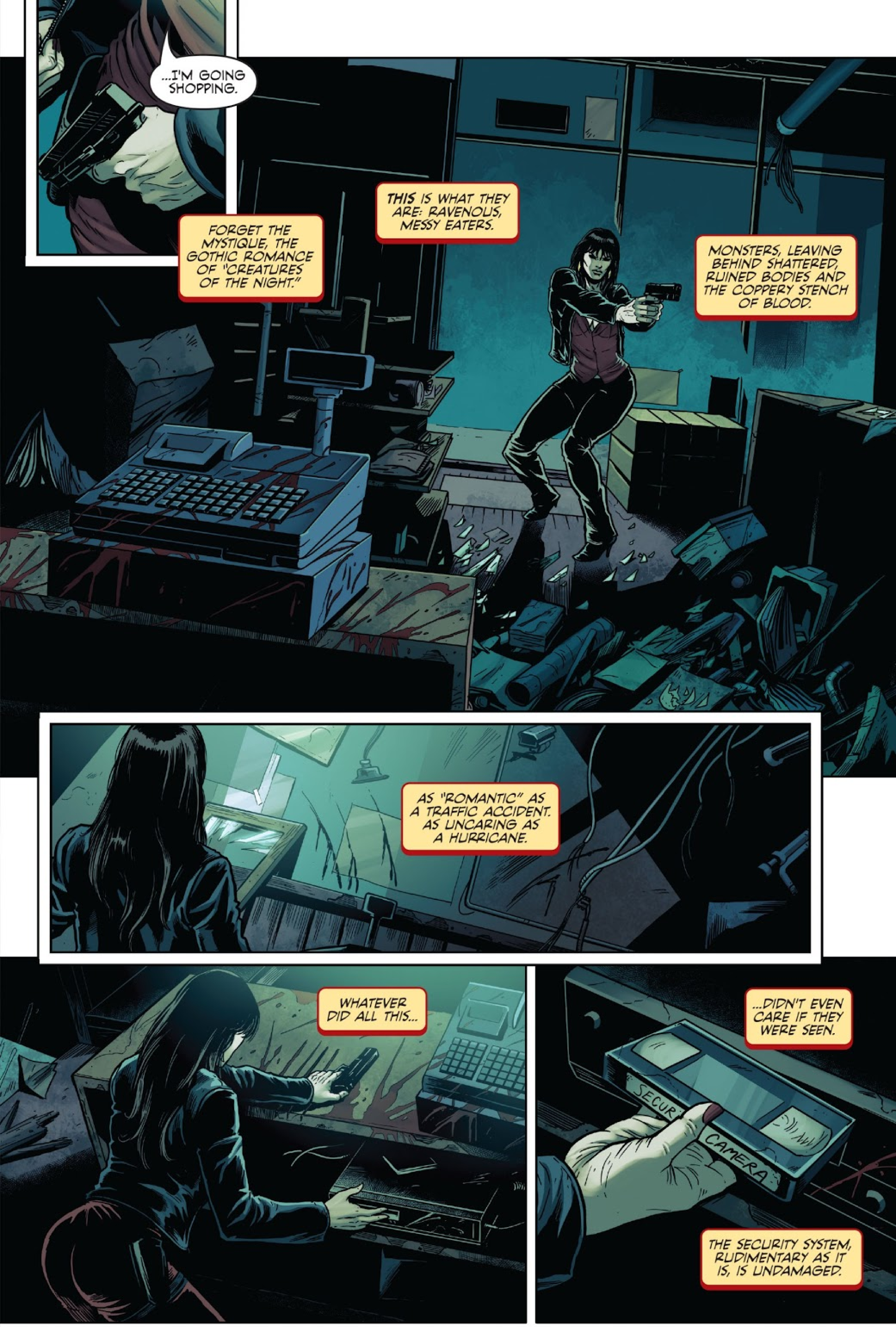

TOMMI'S GAS'N'GULP
I-90 EAST, NEAR EPHRATA, WA.
TOMMI'S
I-90 EAST
♪CHING-DING♪
SORRY, HONEYBUNS. GONNA BE SHUTTIN' DOWN THE PUMPS FOR THE NIGHT.
Hm.
DISCOURTESY.
HELL YEAH, SWEETCHEEKS. *THAT* I GOT A FULL TANK OF.
*UN*ACCEPTABLE
LOOK, LADY, YOU'RE CUTTIN' INTO MY VALUABLE--
--READIN' TIME.

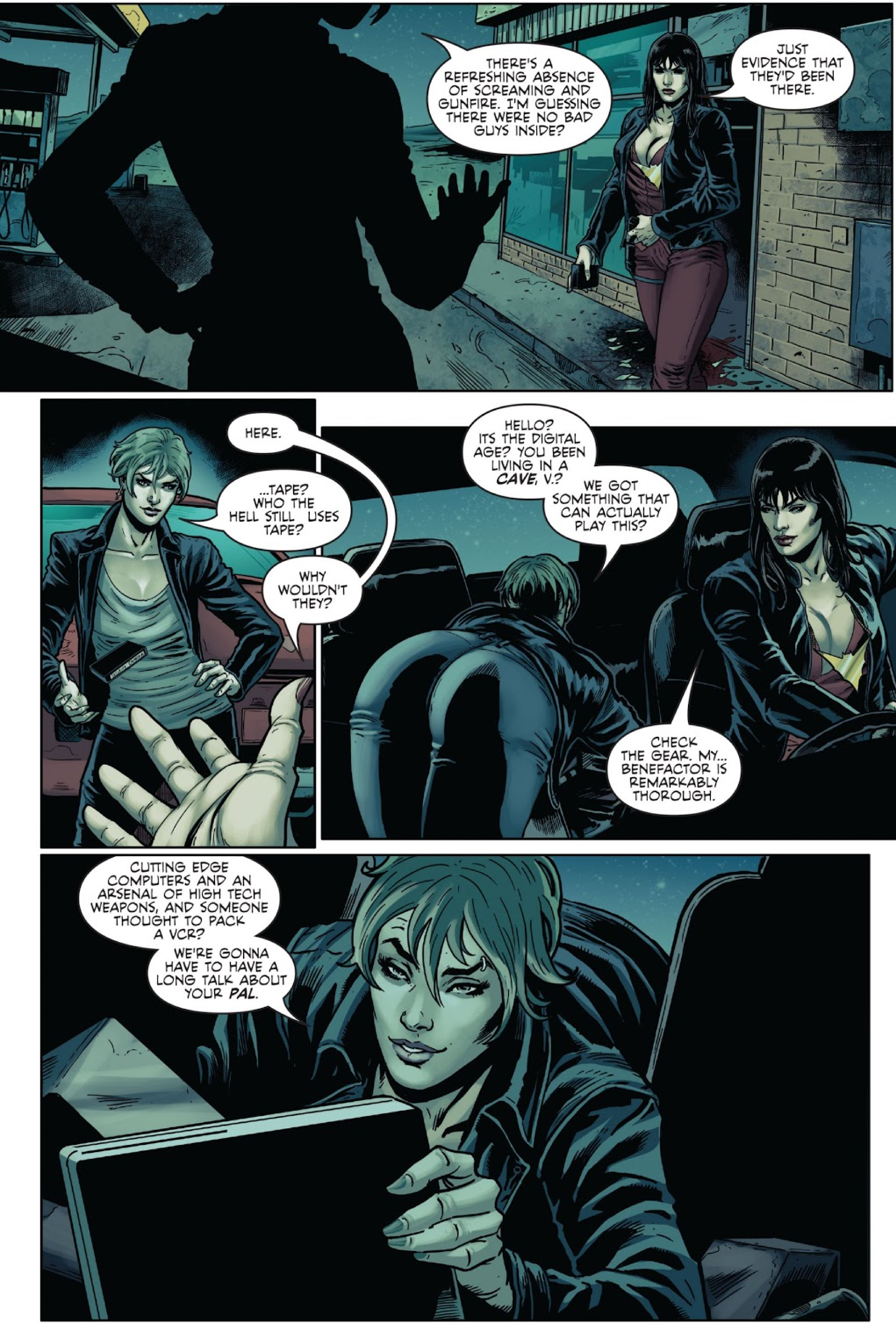

Hm.
Hm.
Hm.
L-L-LOOK, YOU DON'T GOTTA...
...YOU CAN JUST H-HAVE WHAT'S IN THE TILL...
Hm. NO.
THAT IS NOT THE CURRENCY WE TRADE IN.
NOT READING. LOOKING AT PICTURES. LOOKING AT BAD THINGS?
LITTLE MAN. YOU STINK OF FEAR.
YOU REEK OF IMMORALITY.
THAT IS OUR COIN.
Hm. WE WILL SHOW YOU.
TOMMI'S
Gas'n'Gulp
--NNNYYYAAAAAAAAAAARGH!!

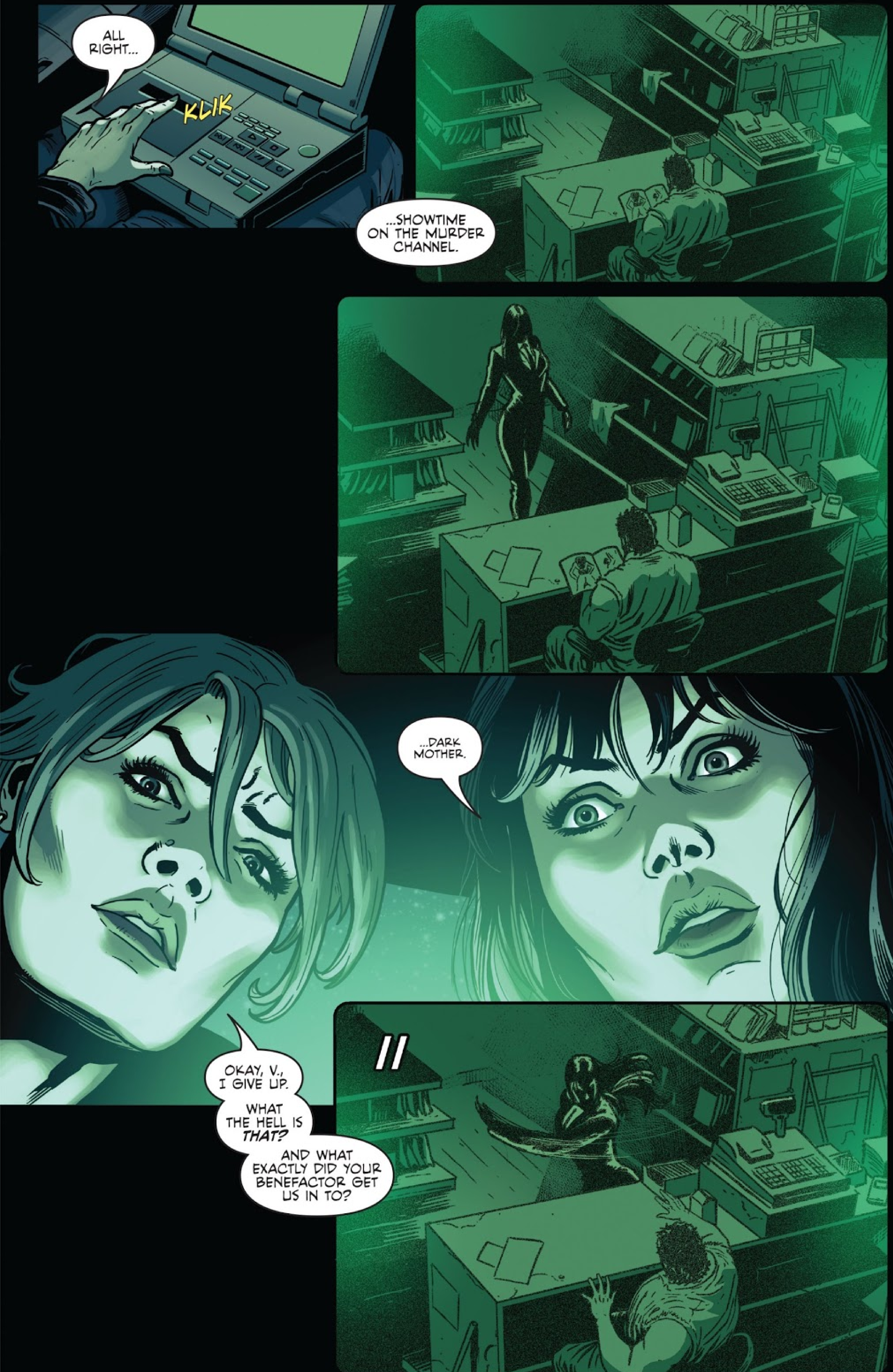

SERIOUSLY, V. THIS IS GOING TO MAKE ME SCREAM, JUST TO BREAK THE MONOTONY.
HER NAME IS SOFIA MURRAY.
BRAVE, RESOURCEFUL, SMART. INVALUABLE IN MY BATTLE AGAINST YAG-ATH VERMELLUS, LE FANU, AND DRACULA.*
VAMPIRELLA #1--6. --J.R.
BUT ALL PARTNERSHIPS HAVE THEIR UPS AND DOWNS.
ALMOST THERE. WHEREVER "THERE" IS.
THE MATHEMATICAL MIDDLE OF FREAKIN' NOWHERE.
LET ME SEE IF I'VE GOT THIS: YOU GET A PHONE CALL, AND THE NEXT THING I KNOW, WE'RE PACKING GUNS INTO AN S.U.V.
(A REALLY SWEET S.U.V.)
AND THEN... WHAT? WE DRIVE OUT HERE TO WHERE GOD INVENTED BOREDOM?
WHO MADE THAT CALL? AND WHAT ARE WE DOING OUT HERE?
FOR A MOMENT, I'M TEMPTED TO TELL HER.
BUT NOT YET.
I COULD USE MY...ABILITIES TO ACQUIRE RESOURCES, WEAPONS, INTEL.
SOMETIMES, HOWEVER, IT IS EASIER TO FORM ALLIANCES.
OH. WELL THAT CLEARS IT UP...
ONCE SHE KNOWS WHO MY ALLY AND BENEFACTOR IS, THERE'S WILL BE NO ESCAPE FOR HER.
THEY'LL NEVER LET HER GO.
...THAT'S NOT SECRETIVE OR MYSTERIOUS OR ANYTHING.
's n'Gulp

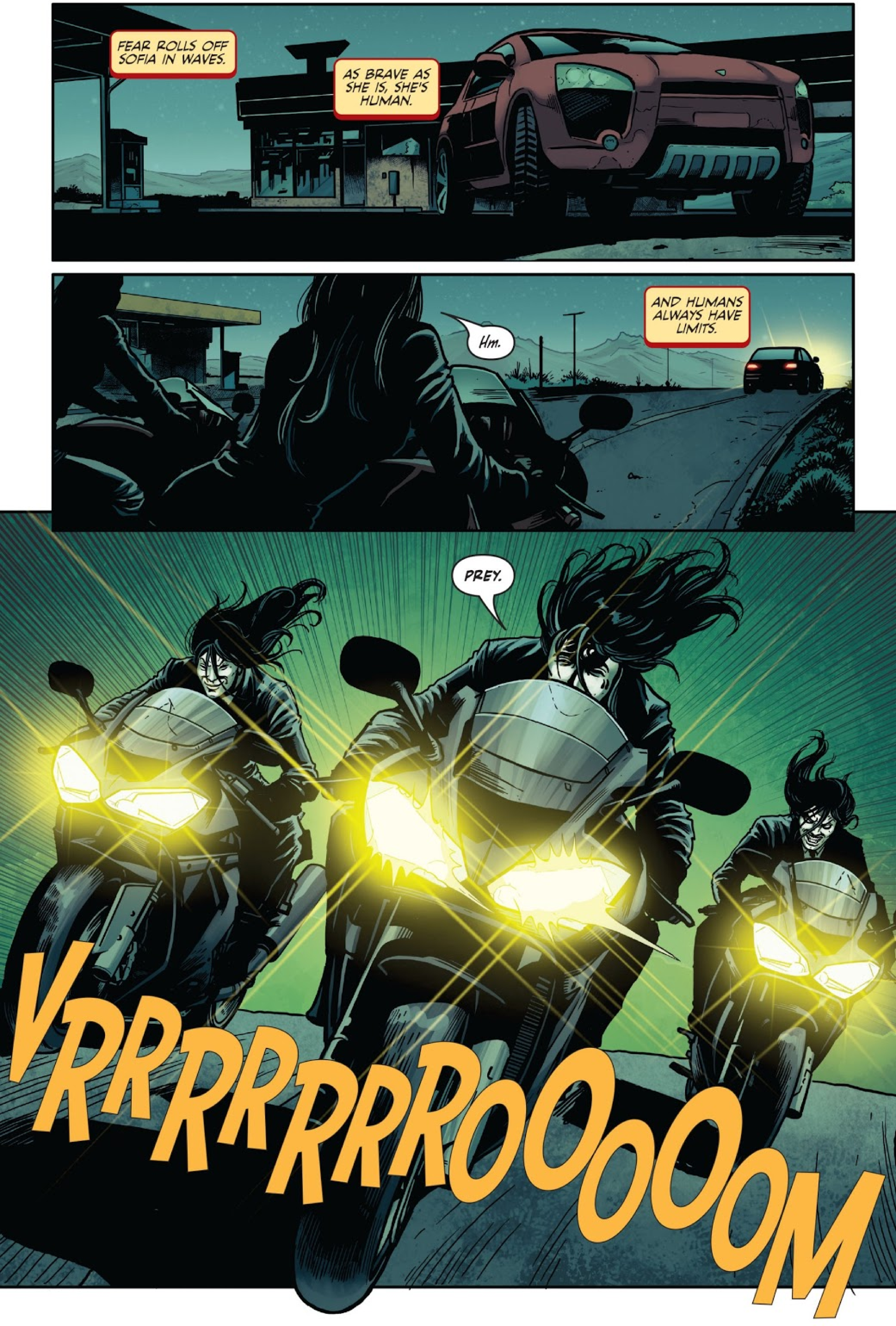

SOMEDAY, I WANT HER TO BE FREE OF ALL THIS.
SERIOUSLY, V. IF THERE'S A VAMPIRE HOLED UP HERE, A STAKE IN THE HEART WOULD BE A MAJOR STEP UP--
Shh.
FREE FROM A MAELSTROM OF BLOOD, MURDER, AND HATE.
SNF SNF
...ARE YOU ARMED?
FAR AWAY FROM THE LIFE I MUST LEAD.
...YEAH.
ARMED AND DEEPLY UNNERVED WHEN YOU SAY STUFF LIKE THAT.
WHAT IS IT?
BLOOD. SOMEONE DIED HERE.
KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN.
I'VE SEEN HORROR MOVIES BEFORE, YOU KNOW.
NEVER GO IN THE BASEMENT WHEN THE LIGHTS GO OUT, NEVER HAVE SEX IN A CANOE, LOOK UP ONCE IN A WHILE...
...CRAP.
HEY, V.?

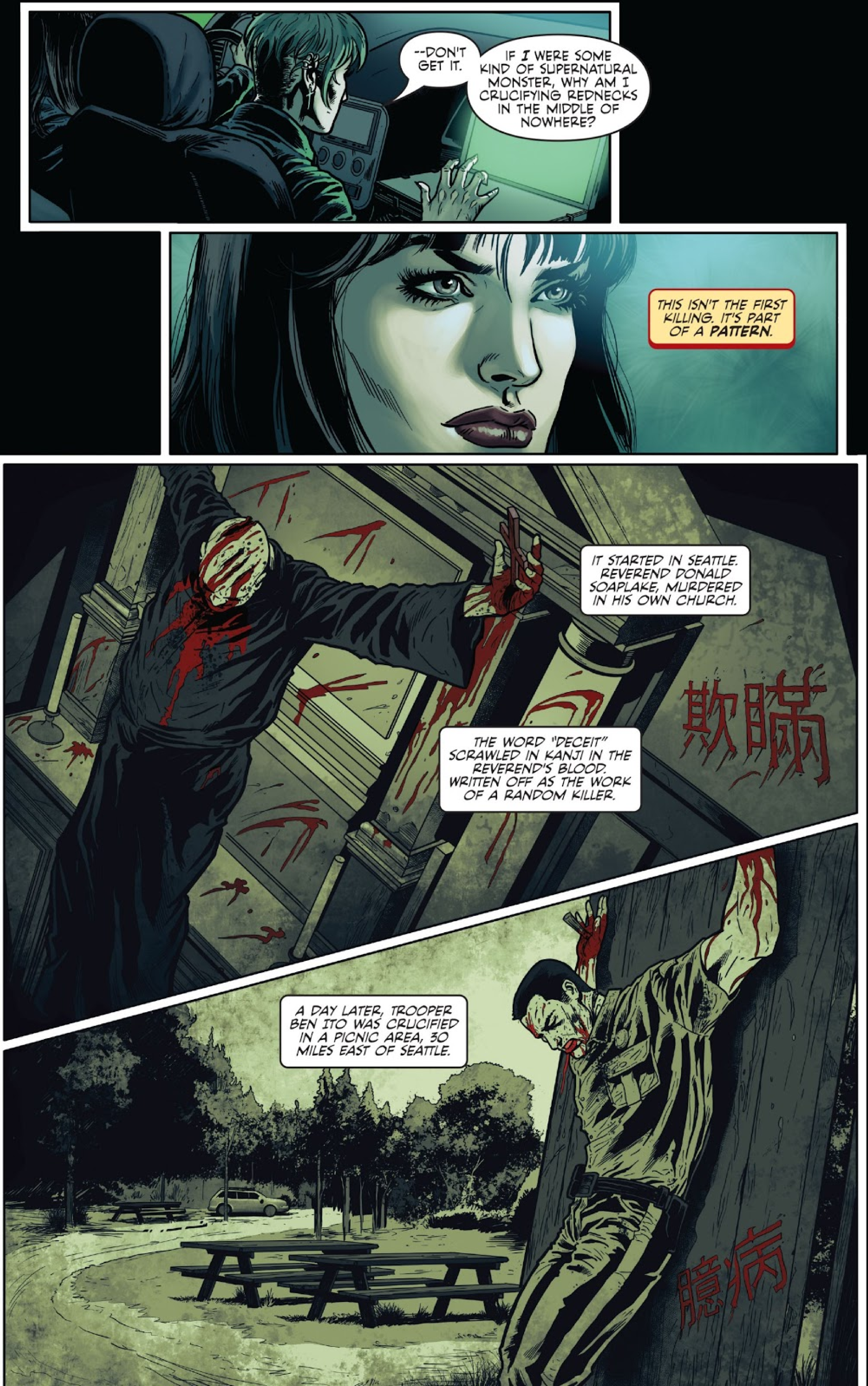

OM
'n
悪徳
...I FOUND YOUR *DEAD* *GUY*.
GUH. I AM *NEVER* GOING TO GET USED TO CRAP LIKE THIS.
YOU'D BE SURPRISED WHAT YOU CAN GET USED TO.
STAY NEAR THE CAR...

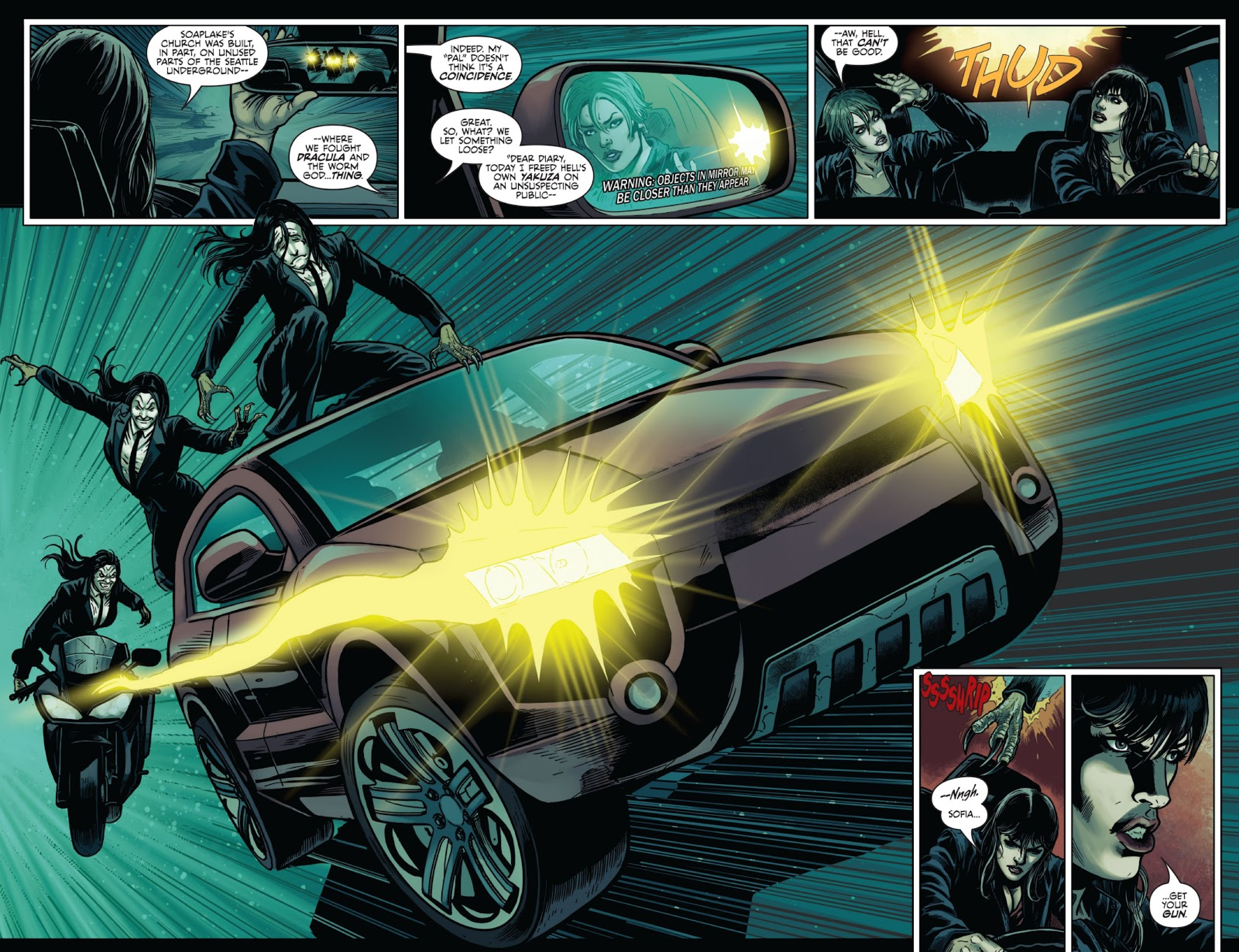

...I'M GOING SHOPPING.
FORGET THE MYSTIQUE, THE GOTHIC ROMANCE OF "CREATURES OF THE NIGHT."
THIS IS WHAT THEY ARE: RAVENOUS, MESSY EATERS.
MONSTERS, LEAVING BEHIND SHATTERED, RUINED BODIES AND THE COPPERY STENCH OF BLOOD.
AS "ROMANTIC" AS A TRAFFIC ACCIDENT. AS UNCARING AS A HURRICANE.
WHATEVER DID ALL THIS...
...DIDN'T EVEN CARE IF THEY WERE SEEN.
SECUR
CAMERA
THE SECURITY SYSTEM, RUDIMENTARY AS IT IS, IS UNDAMAGED.

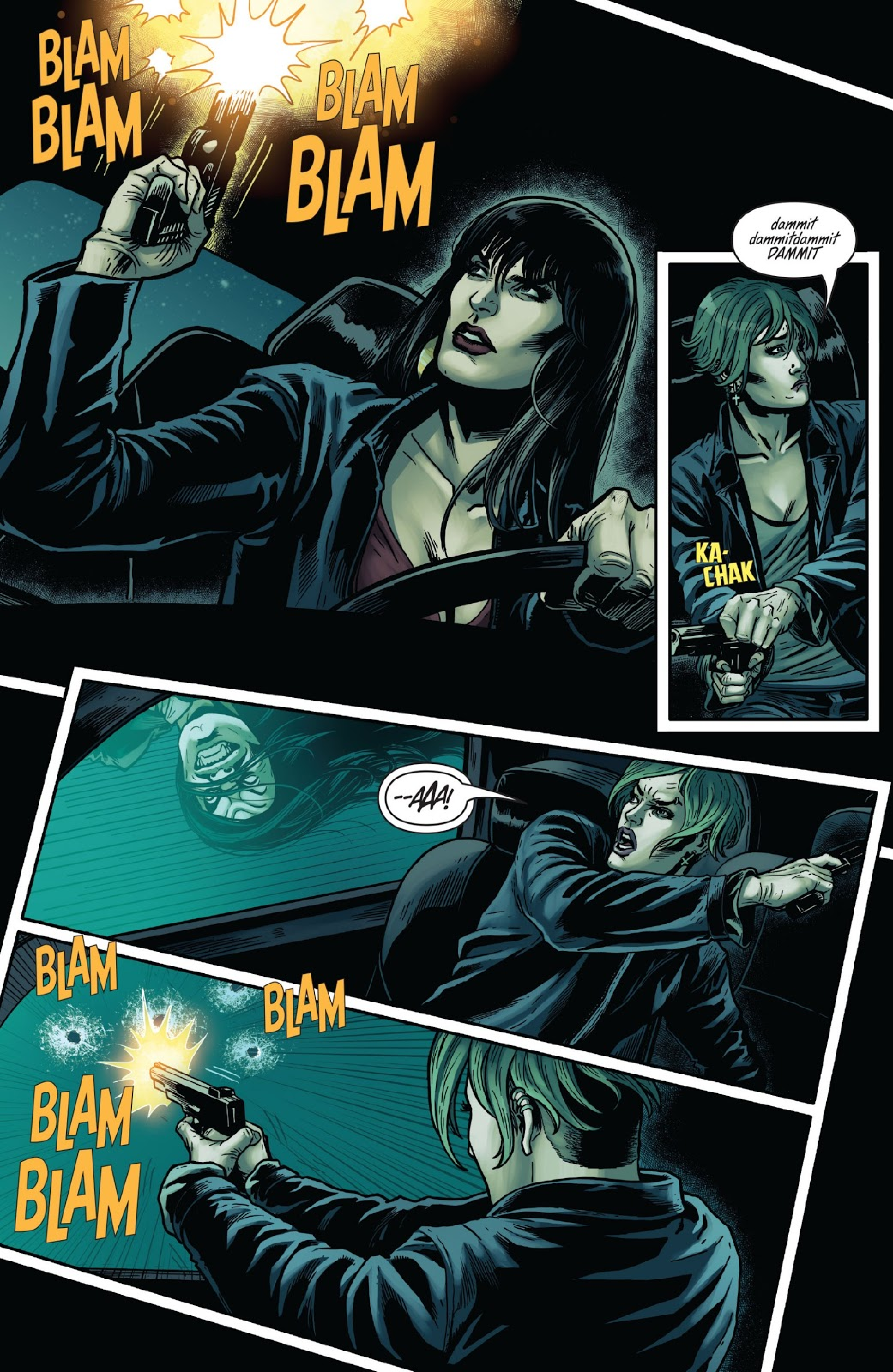

THERE'S A REFRESHING ABSENCE OF SCREAMING AND GUNFIRE. I'M GUESSING THERE WERE NO BAD GUYS INSIDE?
JUST EVIDENCE THAT THEY'D BEEN THERE.
HERE.
...TAPE? WHO THE HELL STILL USES TAPE?
WHY WOULDN'T THEY?
HELLO? ITS THE DIGITAL AGE? YOU BEEN LIVING IN A *CAVE*, V.?
WE GOT SOMETHING THAT CAN ACTUALLY PLAY THIS?
CHECK THE GEAR. MY... BENEFACTOR IS REMARKABLY THOROUGH.
CUTTING EDGE COMPUTERS AND AN ARSENAL OF HIGH TECH WEAPONS, AND SOMEONE THOUGHT TO PACK A VCR?
WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO HAVE A LONG TALK ABOUT YOUR *PAL*.

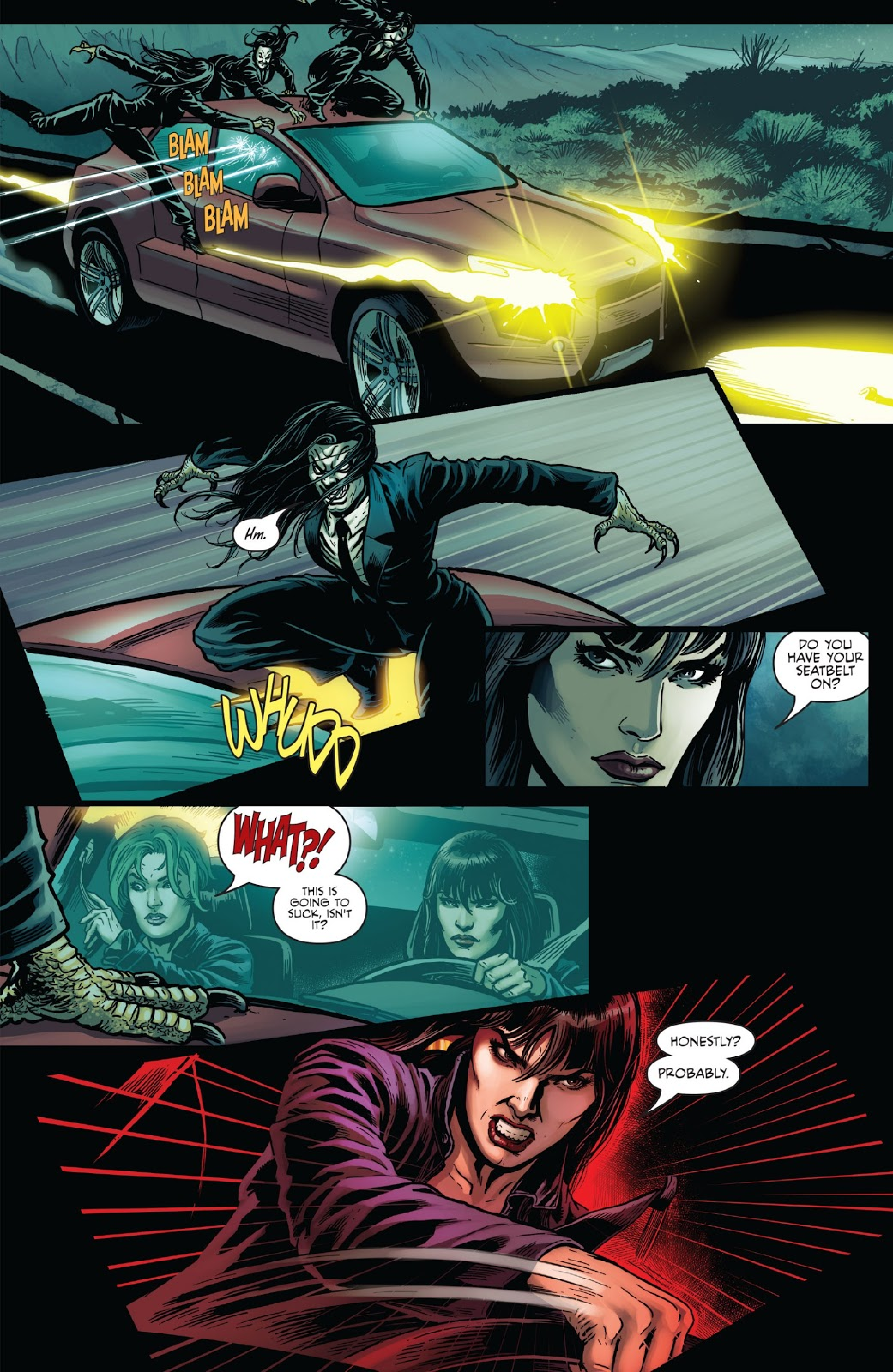

ALL RIGHT...
KLIK
...SHOWTIME ON THE MURDER CHANNEL.
...DARK MOTHER.
OKAY, V., I GIVE UP.
WHAT THE HELL IS *THAT?*
AND WHAT EXACTLY DID YOUR BENEFACTOR GET US IN TO?

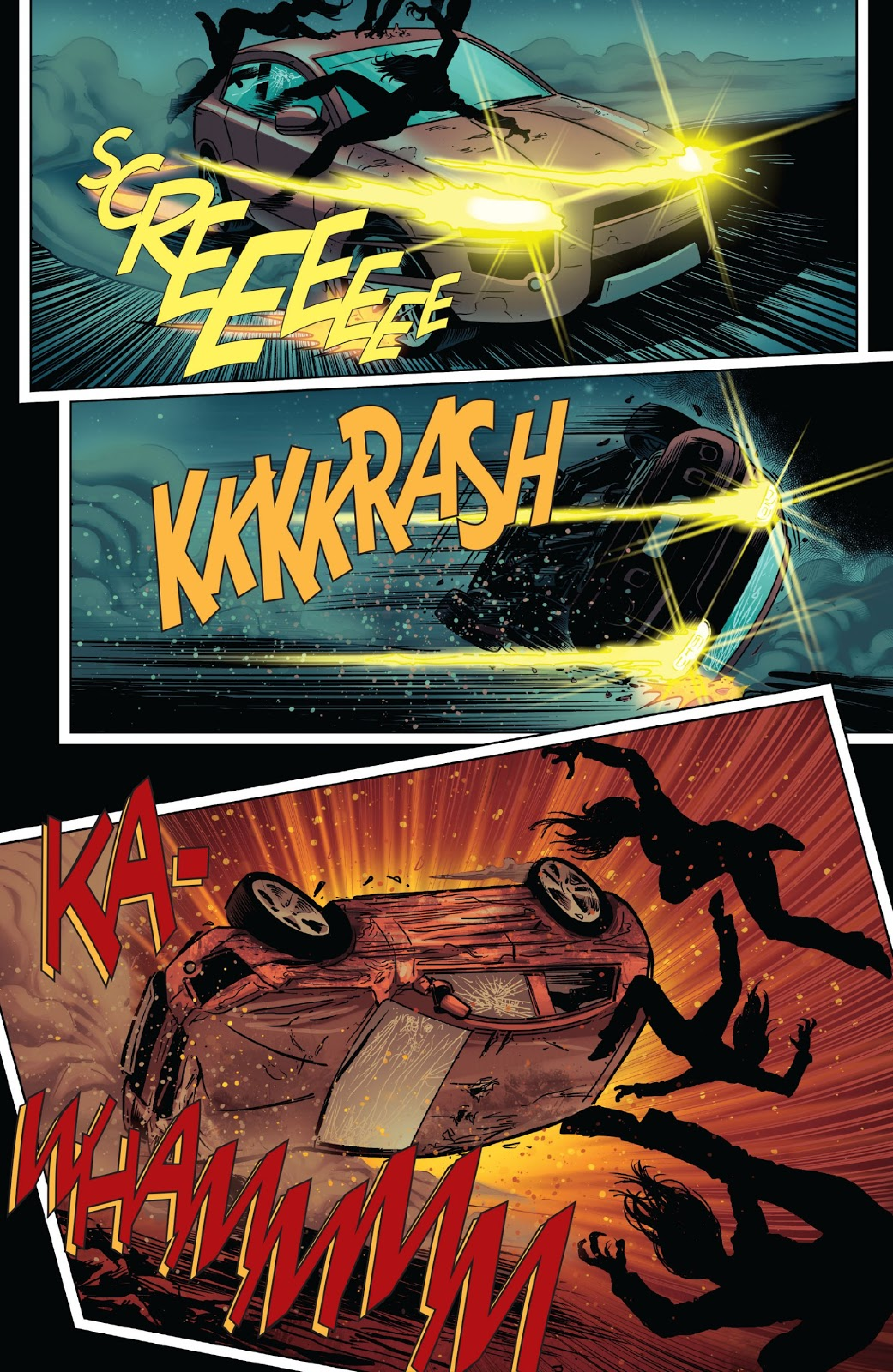

FEAR ROLLS OFF SOFIA IN WAVES.
AS BRAVE AS SHE IS, SHE'S HUMAN.
Hm.
AND HUMANS ALWAYS HAVE LIMITS.
PREY.
VRRRRRRROOOOOOM

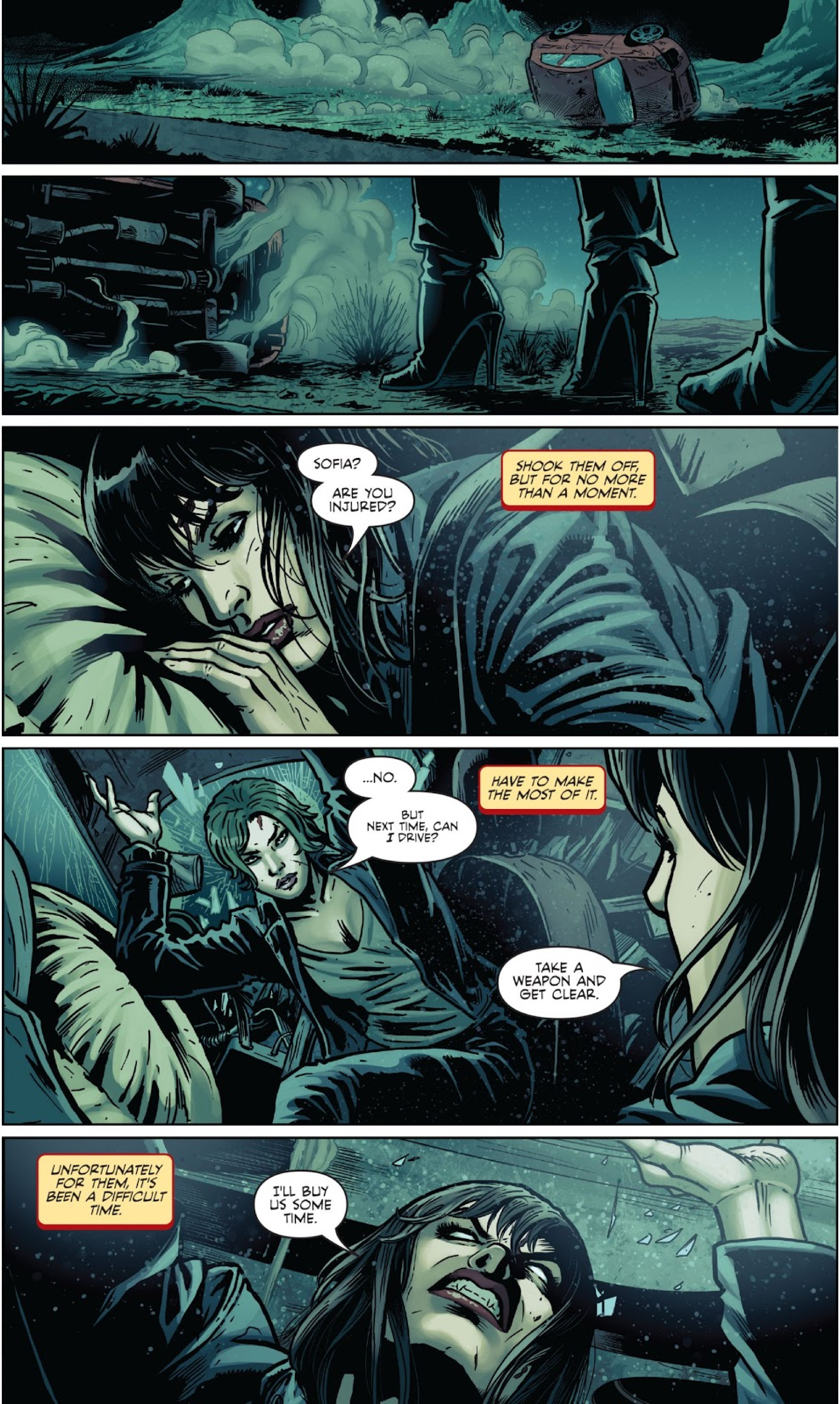

--DON'T GET IT.
IF *I* WERE SOME KIND OF SUPERNATURAL MONSTER, WHY AM I CRUCIFYING REDNECKS IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE?
THIS ISN'T THE FIRST KILLING. IT'S PART OF A **PATTERN**.
IT STARTED IN SEATTLE. REVEREND DONALD SOAPLAKE, MURDERED IN HIS OWN CHURCH.
欺瞞
THE WORD "DECEIT" SCRAWLED IN KANJI IN THE REVEREND'S BLOOD. WRITTEN OFF AS THE WORK OF A RANDOM KILLER.
A DAY LATER, TROOPER BEN ITO WAS CRUCIFIED IN A PICNIC AREA, 30 MILES EAST OF SEATTLE.
臆病

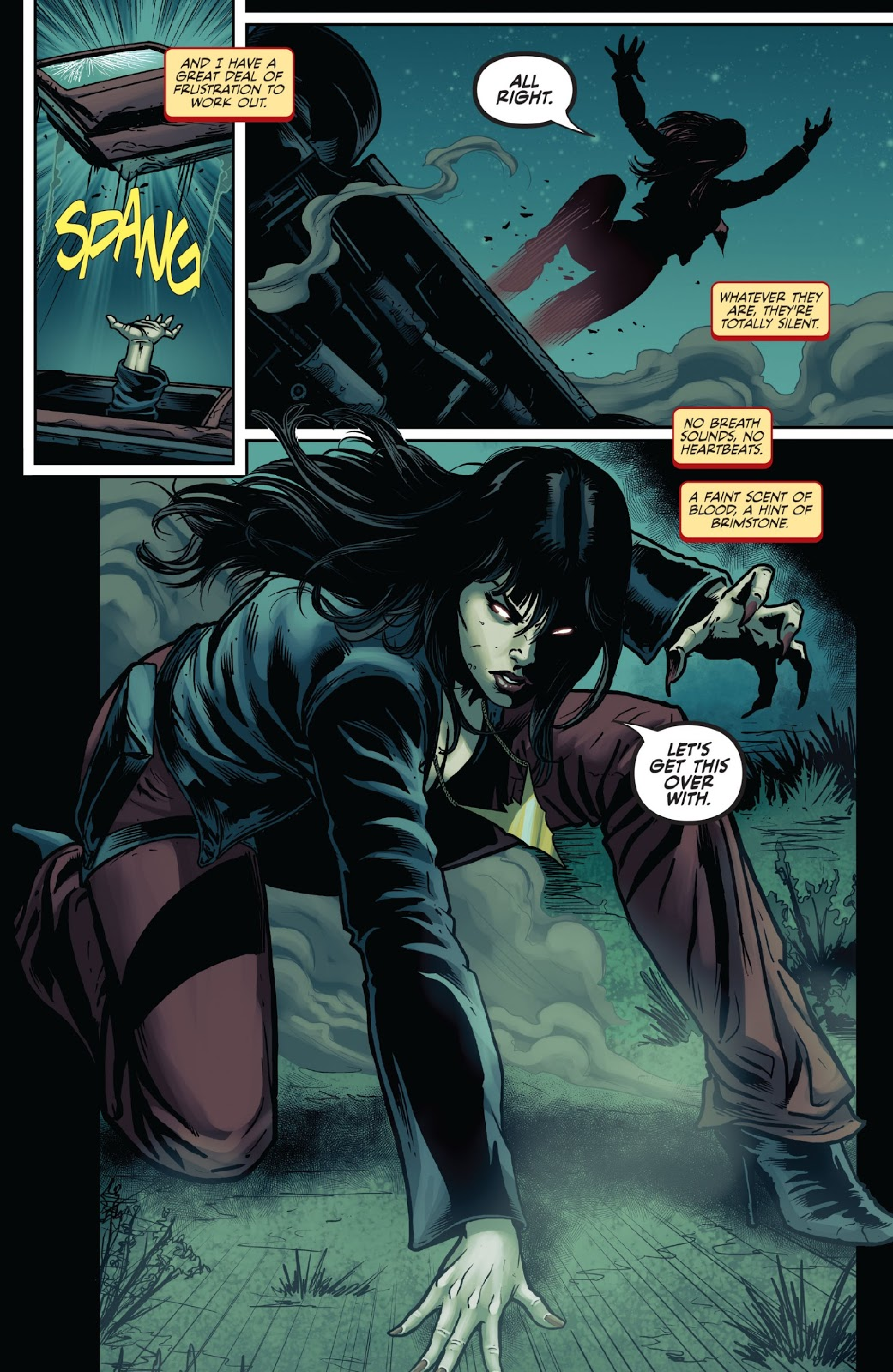

SOAPLAKE'S CHURCH WAS BUILT, IN PART, ON UNUSED PARTS OF THE SEATTLE UNDERGROUND--
--WHERE WE FOUGHT DRACULA AND THE WORM GOD...THING.
INDEED. MY "PAL" DOESN'T THINK IT'S A COINCIDENCE.
GREAT. SO, WHAT? WE LET SOMETHING LOOSE?
"DEAR DIARY, TODAY I FREED HELL'S OWN YAKUZA ON AN UNSUSPECTING PUBLIC--
WARNING: OBJECTS IN MIRROR MAY BE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR
--AW, HELL. THAT CAN'T BE GOOD.
THUD
SSSSHRIP
--Nngh.
SOFIA...
...GET YOUR GUN.

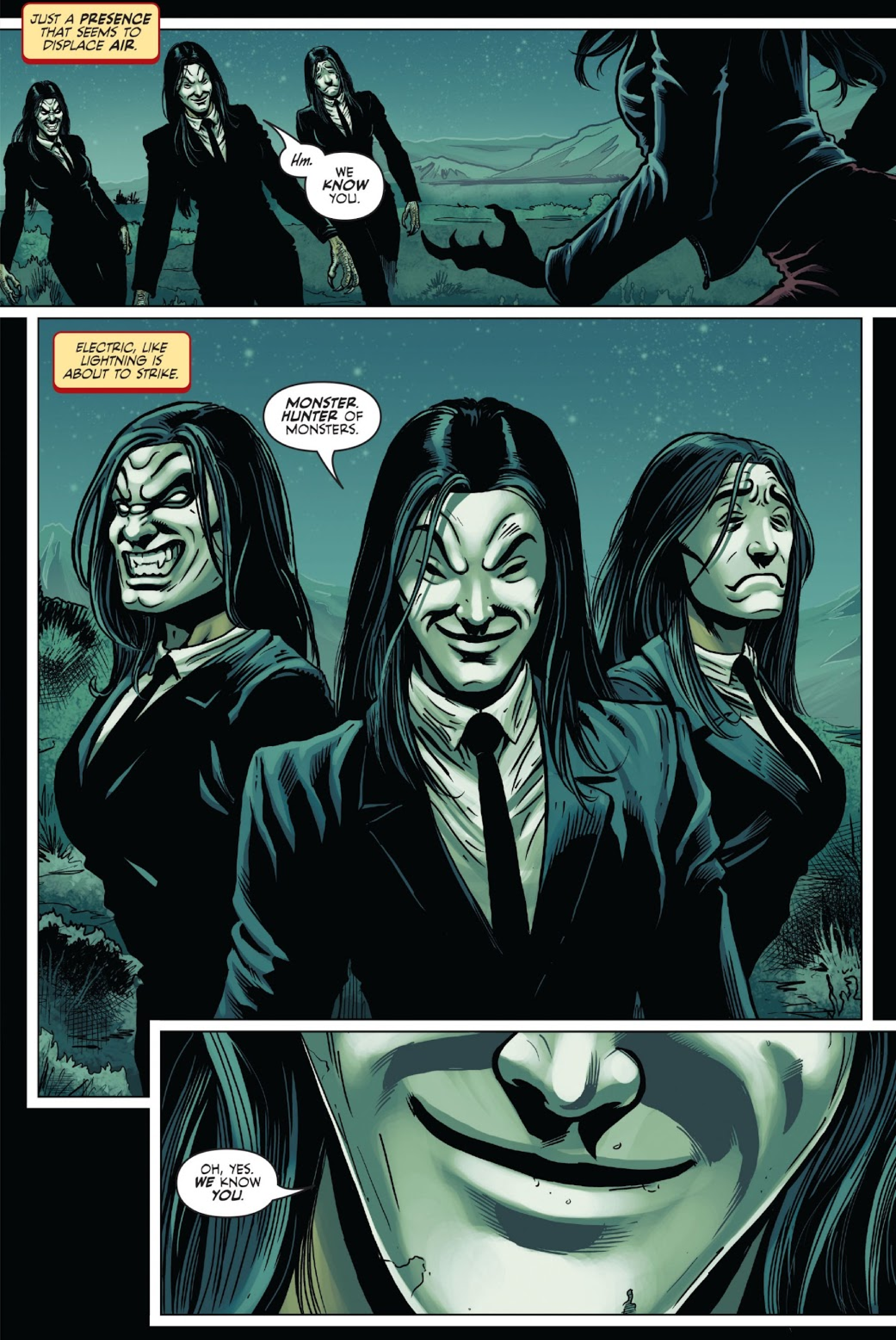

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
dammit dammitdammit DAMMIT
KA-CHAK
--AAA!
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM

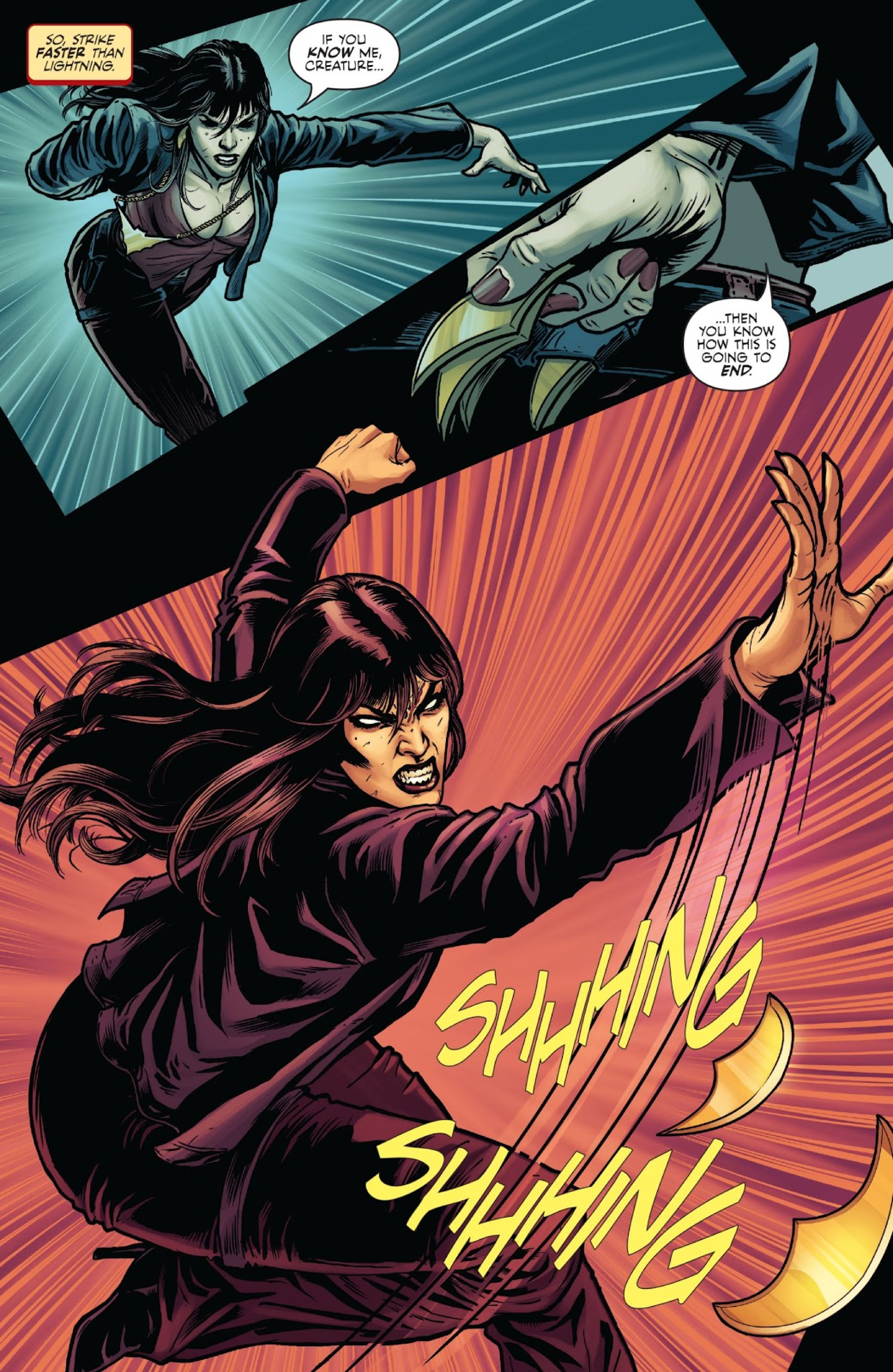

BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
Hm.
WHUDD
DO YOU HAVE YOUR SEATBELT ON?
WHAT?!
THIS IS GOING TO SUCK, ISN'T IT?
HONESTLY?
PROBABLY.

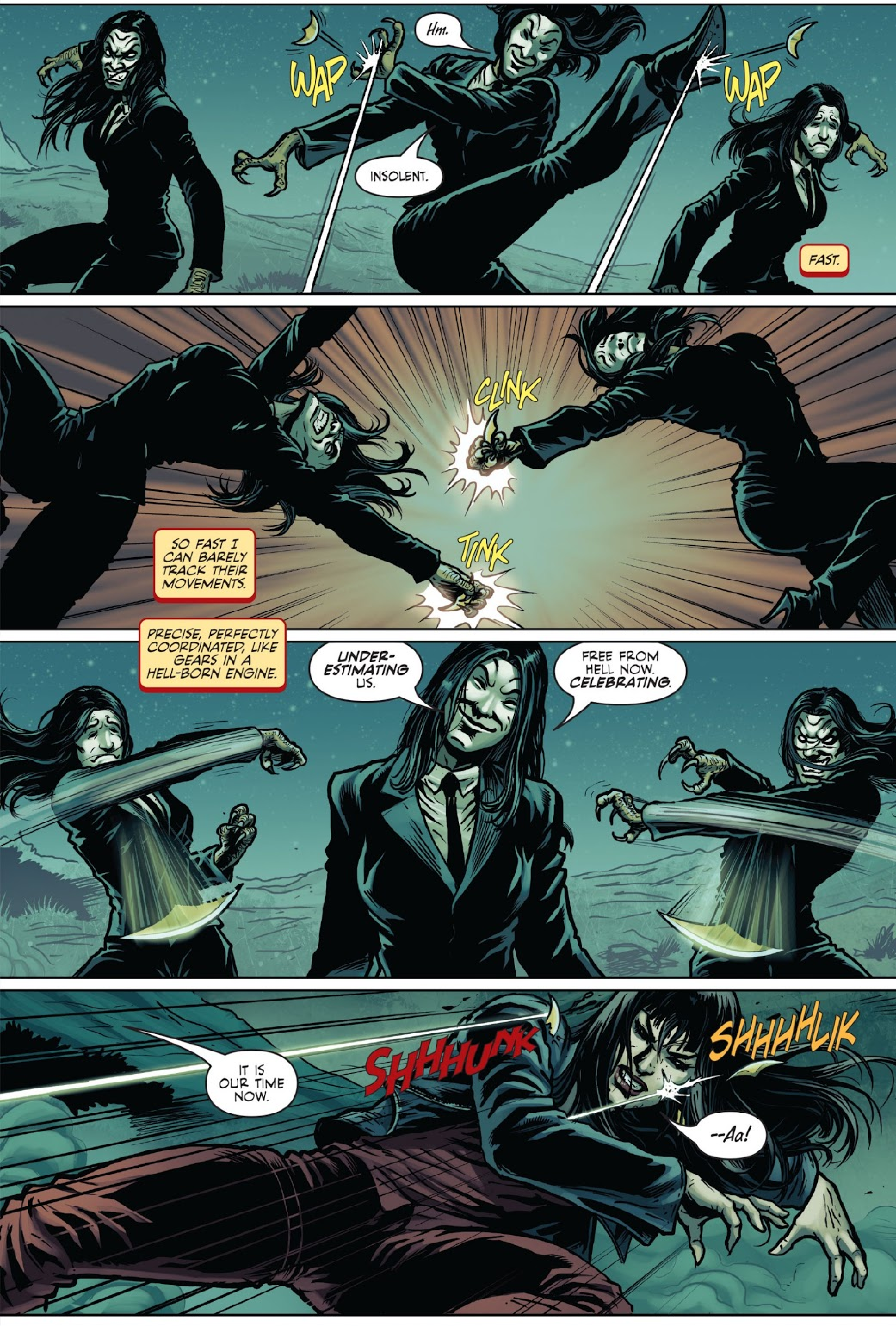

SCREEEEEEE
KKKKRASH
KA-WHAMMMMM

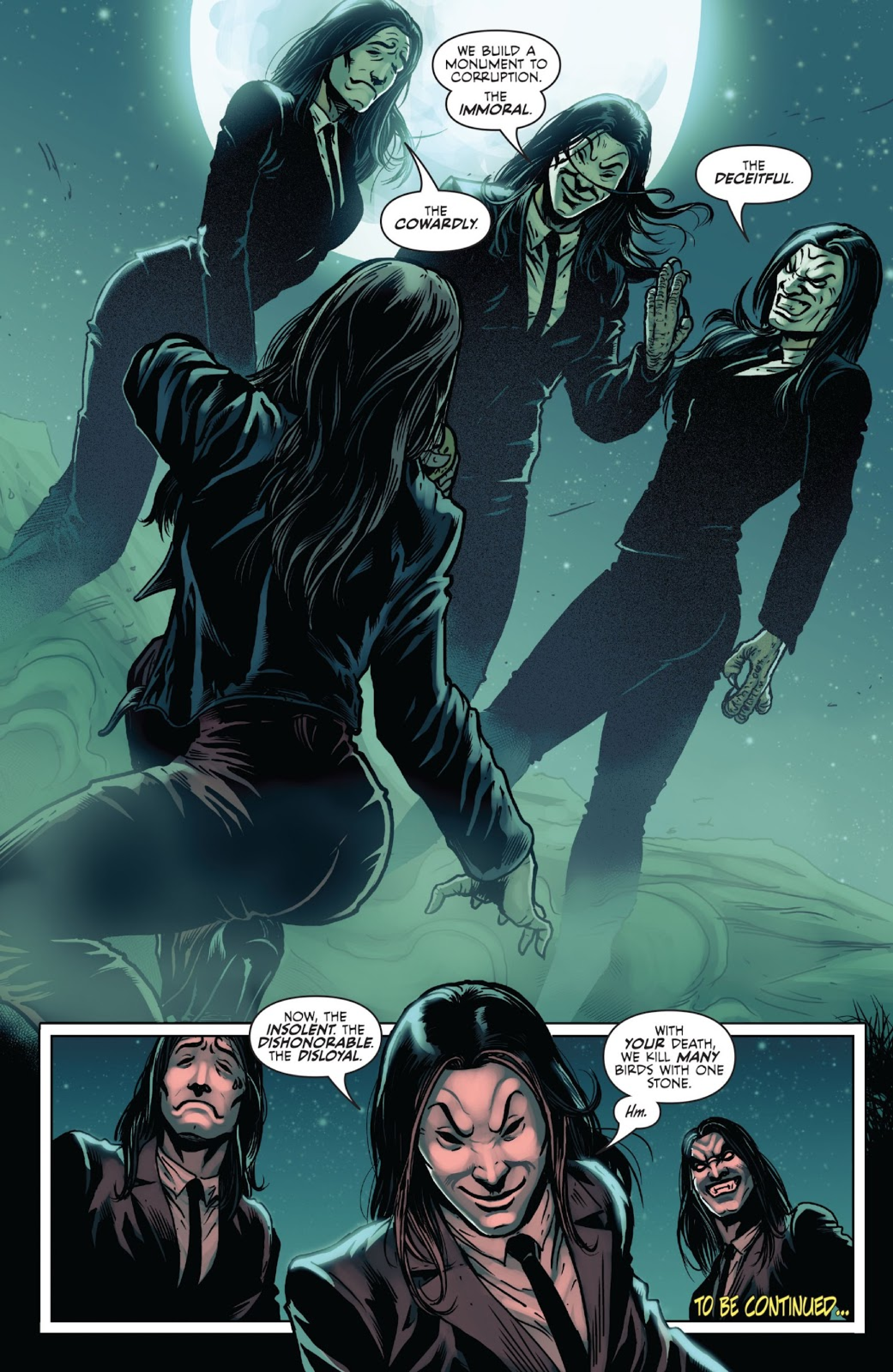

SOFIA?
ARE YOU INJURED?
SHOOK THEM OFF, BUT FOR NO MORE THAN A MOMENT.
...NO.
BUT NEXT TIME, CAN *I* DRIVE?
HAVE TO MAKE THE MOST OF IT.
TAKE A WEAPON AND GET CLEAR.
UNFORTUNATELY FOR THEM, IT'S BEEN A DIFFICULT TIME.
I'LL BUY US SOME TIME.


AND I HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF FRUSTRATION TO WORK OUT.
SPANG
ALL RIGHT.
WHATEVER THEY ARE, THEY'RE TOTALLY SILENT.
NO BREATH SOUNDS, NO HEARTBEATS.
A FAINT SCENT OF BLOOD, A HINT OF BRIMSTONE.
LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.


JUST A PRESENCE THAT SEEMS TO DISPLACE AIR.
Hm. WE KNOW YOU.
ELECTRIC, LIKE LIGHTNING IS ABOUT TO STRIKE.
MONSTER. HUNTER OF MONSTERS.
OH, YES. WE KNOW YOU.


SO, STRIKE FASTER THAN LIGHTNING.
IF YOU KNOW ME, CREATURE...
...THEN YOU KNOW HOW THIS IS GOING TO END.
SHHHING
SHHHING


WAP
Hm.
INSOLENT.
WAP
FAST.
CLINK
SO FAST I CAN BARELY TRACK THEIR MOVEMENTS.
TINK
PRECISE, PERFECTLY COORDINATED, LIKE GEARS IN A HELL-BORN ENGINE.
UNDER-ESTIMATING US.
FREE FROM HELL NOW. CELEBRATING.
IT IS OUR TIME NOW.
SHHHUNK
SHHHHLIK
--Aa!


WE BUILD A MONUMENT TO CORRUPTION.
THE *IMMORAL*.
THE *COWARDLY*.
THE *DECEITFUL*.
NOW, THE *INSOLENT*. THE *DISHONORABLE*. THE *DISLOYAL*.
WITH *YOUR* DEATH, WE KILL *MANY* BIRDS WITH ONE STONE.
Hm.
TO BE CONTINUED...